JESUS
AND OUR PRESSING
PROBLEMS

ROLLIN H. WALKER

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JESUS AND OUR PRESSING PROBLEMS

By
ROLLIN H. WALKER

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TO MY STUDENTS

Whose kindly appreciation has been one of my
chief earthly felicities, I affectionately
dedicate these pages.

CONTENTS

JESUS AND HIS RELIGIOUS INHERITANCE

PAGE
The Old Words Have Lost Life and Power 13
How Jesus Handled a Devitalized Religion 14
  Jesus Knew the Scriptures 15
  Jesus Lived by the Scriptures 17
  Jesus Fulfilled the Scriptures: Fulfillment a Duty to the Pioneers 21
  How Did Jesus Fulfill the Law? 25
    By Deepening Its Demands 25
    By Installing the Religious Motive 27
    By Widening Its Application 28
    By Unifying Its Message 30
    By Rooting Out the Weeds 31
Jesus the Great Conservative 32
Creative Conservatism the Road to Progress 33

JESUS AND HIS CHALLENGE TO FAITH

The Kingdom Is at Hand. Begin Now! 39
The Three Keys to the Kingdom 40
  Repentance 40
  Watchfulness 40
  Prayer 42
    1. What to Pray for 43
      The Lord's Prayer 43
      The Clamors of the Soul 50
    2. How to Pray Successfully 51
      Take Time to Pray 51
      Forgive and Make Restitution 51
      Be Humble 52
      Feed on the Scriptures 53
      Be Persistent 54
      Take the Answer for Granted 58
    3. Faith Within the Reach of Every Man 59
    4. Wherefore Dost Thou Doubt? 60

JESUS AND EARTHLY GOODS

I. THE ACQUIREMENT OF PROPERTY—

PAGE
Earthly Goods the Gift of God........................... 65
Jesus a Foe to Poverty.................................. 66
Happiness Possible in Spite of Poverty.................. 66
Sneak Thieves Transformed Into Sneak Givers............. 68
Beware of Covetousness.................................. 69
Ye Cannot Serve God and Mammon.......................... 70
Faith in Providence an Antidote to Money Madness........ 72
Seeking the Kingdom in Business......................... 73
The Results of Applying the Service Motive in Business.... 76
The Golden Rule Demands Experience and Wisdom........ 77
Recent Progress Promises Great Developments............ 79
Should the Christian Amass Wealth?...................... 80

JESUS AND EARTHLY GOODS

II. THE STEWARDSHIP OF WEALTH—

Be Just Before You Are Philanthropic.................... 85
Riches Neither Permanent Nor Satisfying................. 86
The Rich Fool Up to Date................................ 88
Is Gibraltar Sound?..................................... 89
Better Invest in Gilt-Edged Securities.................. 91
Hard-Hearted Luxury Leads to Misery..................... 93
    The Modern Dives.................................... 96
Generous Sharing Means Inevitable Happiness............ 97
Is It Practicable to Give to Everyone That Asks?......... 98
    Unlimited Love the Underlying Principle............. 99
Prodigality Sometimes True Prudence..................... 101
Some Must Forswear Wealth Altogether.................... 102
Does Highest Perfection Involve the Surrender of Wealth? 104
Principles Regulating Christian Use of Wealth........... 105
    Money Must Serve.................................... 105
    Money Must Unite People Rather Than Separate Them. 105
    Money Must Never Keep Men From Higher Things.... 105
The Needle's Eye.. 106
As Poor, Yet Making Many Rich........................... 107
Big Dividends... 108

JESUS AND THE FAMILY

PAGE
World-Wide Domestic Tragedy a Cry for Christ 113
Jesus Shockingly Sympathetic to Social Outcasts 114
Jesus Shockingly Severe With Respectable Sinners 116
Spiritual Surgery Required in the Interest of the Home 120
The Need of Many Expedients in Fighting Temptation 122
It Is Often Surgery or Death 123
Is Divorce Ever Justifiable? 125
Eunuchs 127
Supreme Loyalty to Christ the Only Solution of the Domestic Tangle 129
The Fire of Religious Enthusiasm Conquers the Fire of the Passions 130
Jesus and the Children 131
God Comes in With the Little Child 132

JESUS AND OUR ENEMIES

I. OUR PERSONAL ENEMIES—

The Need of Spiritual Politicians 137
Peace More Than Pacifism 137
Discord Springs From Censoriousness 138
Cases of Infection Must Be Promptly Treated 139
Aggressive Benevolence the Most Effective Reaction to Outrage 142
  The Form of the Reaction Determined by the Circumstances 142
  Pacifism Must Be Raised to the Point of Audacity 144
Is Such Benevolence Possible? 145

II. OUR NATIONAL ENEMIES—

Does the Sermon on the Mount Apply to War? 147
Jesus' Own Struggle With the War Problem 148
  In the Wilderness 148
  After the Feeding of the Five Thousand 149
  On the Night of the Arrest 150
Selling Your Garment to Buy a Sword 150
The Use of Force Necessary 152
The Practical Question: Can We Defend the Horrors of Modern War? 153
War Not Inevitable 154

PAGE
How Shall We Spray the World Against the Pest of War? 156
  Quenching of National Spirit Not Necessary........... 156
  A New Type of Imperialism Demanded............... 157
  Every Nation Should Go to School to Its Neighbors.... 158
  A Greedy Commercial Imperialism the Chief Menace... 161
  Getting the Habit of Acting as a World Family........ 161
  Educating the World for Peace....................... 163
Peace to Be Consummated by a Martyr Nation........... 164

JESUS AND SELF-SACRIFICE

Jesus No Ascetic.................................... 169
The Mental and Moral Squalor of Nazareth................. 170
The Struggle in the Wilderness........................... 172
The Physical Hardships of the Public Ministry............... 173
Bearing the Burdens of the Poor and Sick................... 175
The Childishness and Unbelief of the Disciples............... 177
The Hatred of the Rulers.................................. 179
The Final Tragedy.. 180
The Meaning of the Sufferings of Christ 182
  The Cross Condemns Conventional Christianity........... 183
  The Cross Encourages the Repentant.................... 183
  The Cross Makes Duty Simple.......................... 185
  The Cross a New Revelation of God and of Duty.......... 186
The Danger of Despising the Cross......................... 187
Suffering Man Cries Out for a Suffering God................. 188

JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus Assumed the Coming of the Spirit..................... 191
  By the Task He Assigned.............................. 191
  By His Silences...................................... 191
  By the Manner of His Teaching......................... 192
Jesus Promised the Coming of the Spirit..................... 192
The Living Christ and the Spirit........................... 194
  Scriptural Language Apparently Inconsistent.............. 194
  An Explanation That Is Too Simple..................... 194
Doctrine of Trinity a Reflection of Christian Experience...... 195
Live by Faith Alone, But Expect the Witness of the Spirit..... 198
The Tests of the Spirit's Presence......................... 200
Conditions for Receiving the Spirit......................... 203
Experiences That Belie the Spirit's Presence................. 206

JESUS AND HIS RELIGIOUS INHERITANCE

No attitude more surely tends to make a man small than the habit of contempt for the past.—*Bishop Lightfoot.*

Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it.—*Jeremiah 31. 31-33.*

JESUS AND HIS RELIGIOUS INHERITANCE

The Old Words Have Lost Life and Power

Conversation about the deeper things of religion seems lately to have gotten a flat tire. The writer recently heard Doctor Norwood, at the City Temple in London, refer to an interview he had just had with a Japanese lady who had embraced Christianity in her native land, but had come with her husband to live in London. "I am much troubled," she said, "by many things in this Christian land which seem to me not at all Christian." "But you must remember," said Doctor Norwood, "that a good many Londoners do not at all profess to be Christians. They are quite outside of the churches." "But," said she, "it is with the church people themselves that I find the greatest cause for grief. I meet them at social gatherings, and when I speak of Christ they seem eager to change the subject; or if they do speak of him, they refer to him in a way so vague that it shows that he is very unreal to them."

We must all admit that there is truth in this indictment of Western Christianity. Even the minister in the pulpit who uses the phrases that were once charged with such a high voltage of conviction, and were so effective in calling men to the service of God, is apt to do it with an apologetic air that renders him quite ineffective. And if he does speak the old words with conviction and fire, the people do not heed him as of yore. Some preachers noticing this have given their gospel an entirely new turn. Their sermons are "fresh and up-to-date," but the empty pews bear fatal witness to the fact that men do not find in their words a note of authority. A radical critic of traditional religion has made this frank confession: "We expected that when we got the gospel expressed in modern scientific terms, and relieved of its burden of out-grown conceptions, the students would crowd in to hear the message; but we have been disappointed. The eager movement toward religion has not come."

We are thus in a dilemma. The old phrases proclaimed by men who have not made terms with modern thought are not effective, and still less effective are the new phrases proclaimed by men who have broken with the past.

HOW JESUS HANDLED A DEVITALIZED RELIGION

Now Jesus also came at a time when religion had lost its glow, but under his hands the fire burned mightily again. An alert study of his spirit and message may reveal his secret, and help us to kindle anew the fires of devotion.

To this end, therefore, let us address ourselves to a study of the way in which Jesus dealt with the body of religious tradition that had come down to him. Much of his Bible had been written to meet conditions as they had existed centuries before his time, and all of it had suffered sadly at the hands of its official interpreters. The religious inheritance of Jesus consisted of the Old Testament, which he would constantly hear repeated in his home, and such explanations of it as he could get from the rabbi in Nazareth, and from the more famous rabbis whom he would hear when he went up to Jerusalem to attend the feasts. (Luke 2. 46.)

What was Jesus' attitude toward the Old Testament and its interpreters?

JESUS KNEW THE SCRIPTURES

The first thing we note about Jesus' attitude toward his Bible is that he took the trouble to become profoundly familiar with it. We have not the slightest evidence that there is any part of the Old Testament that Jesus did not know and understand. And what is more to the point, he saw so deeply into these writings that he realized their application to the changed conditions of his own day. It is one thing to delight in a story like that of the healing of Naaman the Syrian. It is quite another thing to look beneath the surface, and see the general principle that it is the foreigner and the religious outsider who are constantly coming in to inherit the great blessings which the children of the Kingdom are too blind to appreciate. (Luke 4. 24-27.) It is one thing to know that the high priest felt justified in giving David and his famished soldiers the showbread of the tabernacle. It is quite another thing to see in this story the general principle that human necessities and human welfare are always more important than the observance of any religious taboo. (Mark 2. 25-27.)

Here then is the first suggestion that Jesus gives us concerning our attitude toward our religious inheritance. We should make sure that we have realized its deeper meaning. The trouble to-day is that so many men who are seeking to adapt the gospel to new conditions, and to express it in new forms, have never taken the trouble to understand it. One knows instinctively by their patronizing remarks about certain parts of the Bible that they have never seen the burning bush which to enlightened eyes has been glowing in its pages throughout the centuries.

The first step forward must be a widespread revival of prolonged and devout meditation upon the Word of God. We must sink an artesian well into this literature. Especially those who desire to be leaders of men must know something analogous to Jesus' forty days in the desert, where they fast from magazines and superficial theology, and all forms of machine-made literature, and with desperate resolution stay with the Scriptures until the Old Book blesses them, as the angel blessed Jacob, and they are enrolled among the princes who have struggled with its strenuous pages and have prevailed. (Genesis 32. 22-32.)

The new movement headed by Karl Barth, which has made such a profound impression upon Germany and Switzerland, stresses with prophetic power the necessity of return to the Scriptures. And this is a special message of God to this generation. The critics have been repairing the biblical road, and the people have been detouring, but now that they have it fairly well surfaced again, it is time for us to come back and travel the old road. One of the greatest forward movements of the human mind, the Renaissance, began with a revival of the ancient Greek and Latin classics; and the coming spiritual Renaissance must begin in a devout and prayerful study of the Holy Scriptures.

Some years ago the writer took a Sunday afternoon walk through a Chinese town, visiting with the missionary the members of the church. We found one couple with a huge family Bible spread out before them, reading with manifest delight the stories of the Old Testament. It was their newspaper and their novel, as well as their book of devotion. This feeling must come back to America. But someone says, The Bible is not the type of a book to thrill the people of to-day. Do not tell us that! If people will read the dreary stuff that they often wade through, just because it is the latest fad, they certainly would read the dramatic and interesting stories of the Bible if powerful leadership would make it again the style. And if once the mind is given a time exposure to the Bible, the Book will take care of itself.

JESUS LIVED BY THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus not only knew the Bible but he lived by it. He was greater than Moses or any of the prophets, and yet, strangely enough, he seemed to depend upon them. He tells us that in the wilderness when the devil came to him with subtle power, and he was too weak and burned out to think, he saved himself by remembering that it was written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." And when he was lured to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and thus fulfill in a cheap way the national hope of a deliverer who would descend from heaven, he was saved from this presumption by another Scripture which said, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." And when with his imperial imagination he saw the picture of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and realized that with his genius and a little compromise he could put himself on the throne of the Cæsars, he was aided to thrust the suggestion aside by remembering that it was written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew 4. 1-11.)

There are at least three reasons for our Lord's dependence upon the Scriptures:

When he hearkened to the Scriptures he felt that he was hearkening to more than a mere man. The words of the prophets came to him as the breath of God. He knew that it was the will of God to convey his truth to his servants through the mutual action of the whole brotherhood, both past and present; and so, just as he went to John for his baptism, now in his temptation he reached back to an old biblical writer as a divinely appointed channel of the truth and the grace of God.

But there was another big reason for Jesus' use of the Scriptures in his struggles and trials. *He knew that the best individual judgment was liable to err.* He knew that it was God's plan that every man should check up his own insights and his own reasonings by the test of the long experience of the ages. The authority of the Bible consists not merely in the fact that it has been spoken by holy and wise men under what they believed to be the inspiration of the Divine Spirit; it consists also in the fact that it has been tested out by unnumbered millions, and found reliable. Its prophecies have been fulfilled, and its visions have been vindicated by Almighty God in the rise and fall of empires, and in the slow but sure processes of history. The Psalms put it with characteristic force when they say, "The words of Jehovah are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, Purified seven times."

Moreover, in these ancient oracles Jesus recognized his own larger self. Just as a man playing a bass viol does not really appreciate his own part until he hears it in harmony with the rest of the orchestra, so also no man knows his own profoundest convictions and becomes vitally himself, until he reaches back into history and harmonizes his melody with the music of the past. The individual spirit is like a safety match. It must have the right contacts before it will light. And this was true of the Lord Christ as well as of other men, for he was a real Son of man.

After a man has studied history and has seen the ebbing to and fro of the uncertain waves of belief, he can appreciate the value of a body of fundamental convictions that has stood the test of the ages. We are not talking about the Bible as a book of science, which it does not claim to be, but as a Book which shows us how to take hold of God, and find in him overcoming peace and power.

Every man has his higher and his lower moods. Jesus had the experience of the transfiguration, but he also had the experience of the thick darkness when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These extreme examples are but illustrations of the constant fluctuation of sunshine and cloud in all life. If a man maintains his integrity when the depressed mood comes on, he does it by the remembrance of the vision of his own brighter moods, and by the record of the visions of those who have gone before. We can be certain that Jesus sprayed his mind in times of depression with the valiant faith of the Psalms, and the glorious certitudes of the prophets.

Jesus believed that the good men of the past were all still alive, and to his vivid imagination they seemed to be his present companions. The Transfiguration experience, when Moses and Elias appeared with him "in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem," was simply a more vivid instance of what happened in the spirit again and again as he read the prophets.

JESUS FULFILLED THE SCRIPTURES

Fulfillment a Duty to the Pioneers

Jesus felt that he owed it to the prophets and lawgivers to finish their work and make their dreams come true. (John 4. 36.) It was as though they stood about wistfully as he worked on the great temple not made with hands, and one seemed to say to him, "Here is a window cap which I carved long centuries ago; you will put it in, will you not?" Another said, "Here is a column that cost me much sacrifice. I beseech you, let it bear some weight in the glorious temple." And still another old prophet seemed to say, "My carving of the stone was very rough, I can see it all now; but at least put my stone in the hidden foundation, for it cost me bleeding fingers."

Now the revelations of God are just as living as the men who spoke them. They are not dead laws. They are the life of God working in the soul of man, helping him to outgrow his limitations and reach up to a better life. But alas, we are apt to take these living oracles and make them into yardsticks. We forget that Aaron's rod budded. It always does, and unless it buds it has ceased to be an Aaron's rod and become a dead thing.

Men to-day are apt to fall into one of two classes: those who are slaves to the past, and those who have contempt for it. But there is a growing minority who, like Jesus, live under the inspiration of the past, and out of respect to its great forward-looking prophets obey the challenge to reach out into new avenues of thought, and to try new experiments.

Picture an American pioneer who in the early days went into the primeval forest, and with incredible labor cleared his little farm, and built what for those days was a commodious log cabin. He has two sons, and he leaves his farm to their joint ownership. One son out of reverence to his father wishes to keep everything just as his father left it. The other says, "No! Our father was in his day daringly progressive. He was a pioneer. Out of respect to his memory let us also be pioneers. Let us be the first in this countryside to bring in a tractor plow, the first to try the new crops that the experts are recommending, and the first to import a better breed of cattle for our dairy. This is the way to show that we are true sons of the brave old man from whom we are descended."

Some literalists wish to preserve the Bible by embalming it; but embalming fluid means death. Some modernists wish to leave the Bible behind, but that also means death. The true disciple strives to develop in the direction in which the Bible points. He tries to align his thinking with the whole trend of biblical teaching back through the ages. He feels that it is his business not to branch out into something novel, but to finish that which God has begun. Yet he must apply the Bible to circumstances not contemplated by the writers of the original Scriptures, and hence there must be an element of the creative in his thinking. Jesus regarded the words of God not as rules and regulations, primarily, but as seeds which must grow up and bear fruit.

In the parable of the Vine and the Branches Jesus says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15. 7.) We might naturally have expected the verse to run like this: If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall obey exactly the rules of my gospel. Not so! "Ask whatsoever ye will." The result of his words abiding in us is that we desire things that we have not desired before, and we ask for them and receive them. Notice here the element of freedom: "Whatsoever ye will." This is the creative effect of the word of God upon the mind of man. It makes him a kind of God, according to the ancient Scripture which says, "I said, Ye are gods unto whom the word of God came." It says to man, Fulfill me by looking out on life after long contemplation of my meaning, and then asking what you spontaneously desire. The word of God has not produced its intended effect unless it thus leads to a creative act, unless it causes men to bring about something brand new in the world that will, as it were, surprise the Saviour, even as the centurion caused Jesus to marvel at his faith. God is looking for spiritual Burbanks who will bring forth results that have never before been seen in the history of the world.

The Old Testament kept saying to Jesus, "Finish me. I am only Volume One; write Volume Two."

Jesus obeyed the challenge, and as a result of his teaching we now have the New Testament which, instead of discounting the Old, has given it a permanent sacredness by making it the ancestor of a great development. *Nothing makes the old sacred like giving it an outcome.* Take the words of Jesus, "What ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops." The one who honors this command is not the man who makes himself a laughingstock by preaching the gospel perched on the steep roof of one of our modern houses. It is the man who speaks the message of Christ into the microphone of a radio.

Imagine Abraham coming to life again, and commanded to go out into a land which he was to receive for an inheritance, and taking camels and asses when there was a road over which he could drive a Ford! Impossible.

The chief enemy of the Bible is the man who holds fanatically to all the ancient forms, for as Paul says, "The letter killeth." It kills not merely the man upon whom it is enforced, but alas, it kills the influence of the Book in whose name it is enforced. The writer once heard his great teacher, Henry Sheldon, say that the ages of skepticism have never come after the ages of free thought and critical inquiry. Invariably they have followed the ages of rigid external conformity to the traditions of the past.

When the housewife finds an abundance of ripe fruit on her hands, there is but one thing for her to do if she wishes to keep it from spoiling, and that is to stew it; and thus by changing the form she preserves the substance. And we must constantly do this with our religious formularies. If we use old wine skins, says Jesus, the new wine will burst them, and both will be destroyed.

Some churches say to their converts, "God has spoken through his appointed ministers; stop thinking and obey." But the Bible says, "God has spoken; therefore begin to think creatively." The writers of the Bible had such a forward look that their statements are embodied in symbols that are capable of expressing an ever larger meaning as the years unfold. Their words are like boys' clothing made with huge hems ready to be let out for lengthening arms and legs. Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth."

HOW DID JESUS FULFILL THE LAW?

Let us inquire more in detail just how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament. Let us begin by considering how he fulfilled the moral law.

1. *He Deepened Its Demands.*

In the first place, Jesus fulfilled the law of Moses by deepening the application of his commandments. Moses said, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." But Jesus said, "I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; . . . But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one." (Matthew 5. 33-37.) Moses was making a brave battle against the appalling iniquity of using the name of Jehovah to support a lie. Jesus goes still further, and says, It is an abomination to swear falsely by anything, for every object in nature is sacred because of its relation to God. The true course, he would say, is to be so absolutely true in all your words that you will not need to swear at all, because there will be no difference in your sense of the duty of being sincere at any one time as over against another. We have here simply a case of turning Moses' brave candle burning in the darkness into a great electric light that illuminates the whole environment.

Sometimes Jesus' fulfillment seemed like destruction, as when he called the multitudes unto him and said, "Hear me all of you, and understand: there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man." (Mark 7. 14-23.) Here Jesus seems to be going squarely against those rules in Leviticus that forbid the eating of the so-called unclean foods. And in a real sense this is true. Jesus knew full well that these prescriptions were not a vital part of religion, and yet they did express a wistful aspiration for cleanness and purity. So he says, "I will show you a better way to attain this purity: Let all your thoughts and acts be inspired by love, and this love will purify everything with which you have to do. (Luke 11. 41.) Be sure that you do not think and act like swine, and then swine's flesh will be pure unto you." Thus Jesus fulfilled everything in the old taboo that was capable of being fulfilled.

2. *He Installed the Religious Motive.*

But Jesus deepened and intensified the law in another way. He insisted that no moral duty was done save as it was done with an eye single to the glory of God. Morality must be religious. "When thou doest alms," says Jesus, "let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." (Matthew 6. 3, 4). This secrecy was enjoined so that every man might assure himself that his liberality was not a pose before the public, but an act of secret devotion to God. Jesus knew that the morality that was not performed as an act of worship would not stand the strain. Most of every man's life is in secret. His thoughts are hidden, and even his outward life is much of it passed in the secrecy of his own room, and unless he has a vivid sense of the All-seeing Eye he is sure to be more or less of a hypocrite. When the rains descend and the floods come, and the winds blow, theatrical morality always yields to the pressure and goes down.

By his stress upon the secret aspects of a man's life Jesus sought to transform morals from an outward etiquette to an inward passion; and by commanding all service to be done for his sake he gave to the humblest act an august significance. (Matthew 25. 40.) Here is one of the secrets of the Christian's joy. He learns to greet every opportunity of contact with the lowliest of his fellow creatures as an opportunity to honor Christ, and thus life takes on a surprising glow.

3. *He Widened Its Application.*

Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament by widening its application. He did this in two ways:

(1) The laws of Moses in their original form were civil statutes adapted to a primitive agricultural people. Jesus put them in such a form as would be applicable to the race as a whole. He transformed them from local police regulations to principles, and by his vivid paradoxes and epigrams gave the seed wings on which it would be borne to the four winds of heaven. His words are so picturesque that they can be remembered by the savage and carried by him over the jungle trail back to his native kraal.

A great radio preacher must address his immediate audience as though they were the only people in the world, and adapt himself perfectly to their needs; and yet he must keep in mind the fact that many people of different races and creeds may be listening in, and he must make himself intelligible to them also, and he must give them no just cause of offense because of any racial or sectarian narrowness. This is what Jesus did. He ministered personally to his little group of disciples, but he spoke as though he were broadcasting to the shores of the seven seas, and to all the ages.

(2) The second way in which Jesus broadened the application of Moses' law grows inevitably out of the first. He would not concede that moral obligations obtain only within national and racial borders. Moses made a brave fight for the decent treatment of the stranger within their gates, and yet, on account of the hardness of their hearts, he was compelled to allow them to make some distinction between their duty to a fellow Jew and their duty to a foreigner. By the story of the Good Samaritan Jesus compelled the lawyer to admit that the despised Samaritan had been the only true neighbor to the Jew who had fallen among thieves; and he thus suggests that our neighbor is any man whom we would allow to rescue us from some dreadful peril. What a biting acid is this for our discrimination against the Negro! Who would not let a Negro rescue him from starvation or drowning? If so, he is our neighbor. Why, then, in the name of God, should he not be treated with the consideration and courtesy that he would certainly receive from Him who bled on the cross for his salvation? (Luke 10. 25-37; 17. 12-19; Matthew 8. 11, 12.)

One might suppose that this intensification of the demands of the law, and this widening of its application, would vastly increase the strain that religion puts upon the individual. But just the opposite is true, for by making the demands of God primarily one of whole-hearted passionate inner loyalty, and by making the love of God a doubly intense reality, Jesus gave men a powerful stimulus, and set them free to act spontaneously. "If ye abide in my word," says he, "*then* are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8. 31, 32.) The teachings of Jesus are chemically pure from the slightest admixture of anything that would enslave the conscience. The prophets began this movement toward simplicity and freedom. Jesus continued it. His demands are so spiritual that they flexibly adapt themselves to every changing circumstance, and yet they are living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword. They are free, dangerously free, and yet very exacting.

4. *He Unified Its Message.*

Again, Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament by creatively combining the various strands of truth emphasized by different prophets. Art critics tell us that the most difficult task of the sculptor is to pose a group of figures in a natural and symmetrical fashion. By all odds the most difficult thing in morals is to maintain the balance between the various demands of duty. We are prone to forget the supernatural poise and good judgment of Jesus in combining and grouping all that had come down to him from the past. He allowed nothing to be understressed or overstressed in his teaching. And yet instead of exhibiting the cold, judicial temper which is apt to characterize the poised mind, he succeeded in expressing everything with the intensity of hot lava coming down the sides of a volcano. This accomplishment is a miracle.

There was one duty that Jesus knew could not be overstressed. Strangely enough, when it was vehemently emphasized, it would cause everything else to take its proper place and relationship. It was the duty of loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbors as ourselves. Fanaticism and narrowness never spring out of passionate love to God and to our fellow men.

5. *He Rooted Out the Weeds.*

During the course of certain repairs in the El-Aksa Mosque in the temple inclosure at Jerusalem, a portion of the plastering was taken away, and behind it they found the wonderful gold mosaic which now covers the top of the arches at the south end. When Jesus came he scraped away the plastering of rabbinical teachings that covered the Bible, and revealed to men the beautiful mosaic of the spiritual religion of the Psalms and the prophets.

When one determines sacredly to preserve his religious inheritance, he must decide whether he is going to keep the plastering or the mosaic. Will he be loyal to the type of religion we find in the prophet Amos and the fifty-first psalm, or will he be loyal to the type of orthodoxy that strained at the gnat of plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath Day and swallowed the camel of indifference to human suffering? Jesus set himself against everything that made void the law of God. He condemned every religious scruple that tended to make men forget that their primary duty was to be kind and just to their fellow men. "Every plant," says he, "which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up." (Matthew 15. 13).

JESUS THE GREAT CONSERVATIVE

Although Jesus felt obliged to oppose the elaborate system that enshrined and, as he said, entombed religion in his day, he was very careful to be *in no sense a reactionary*. Next to the danger of cowardice and compromise the supreme danger of the reformer is always to be a reactionary. Here was the danger to which the followers of the Protestant reformers fell a prey. The pope's tyrannical stress on uniformity, and his quenching of the spirit of free prophecy, made them forget that Christ was not honored by splitting Christendom up into a multitude of warring sects.

Jesus would put nothing of any value into the scrap heap. He was like the archæologists that one sees at work on a sacred site in Palestine. Small bits of broken pottery are carefully gathered and washed, and the most patient effort made to piece them together with the hope of constructing a thing of beauty and a revealer of history.

Jesus even went so far as to urge the people to listen to the scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat, because, for the time being, there was no other way for them to get access to the ancient oracles. Think of it! Urging the people to listen to the men who were plotting to murder him, for fear if he preached a revolt from the synagogue it would be like the destruction of the trees which hold the soil together on a mountainside. When they are gone, the torrents leave nothing but the bare rock. This broad-mindedness of Jesus was one of the marvels of his character.

CREATIVE CONSERVATISM THE ROAD TO PROGRESS

It needs to be said with prophetic authority to this generation that they must imitate the conservatism of Jesus. Our young people do not need an exhortation to freedom in handling their religious inheritance, although they do gravely need an exhortation to thoroughness in their experiments. But there is a frightful disposition to forget history, and to root up the wheat with the tares. To get hold of a college audience to-day many a chapel speaker feels that the first thing he must do is to bring on the platform some fine old mahogany furniture and chop it up, just to show that he is not a mossback conservative. We are doing with the creeds that we have inherited somewhat as the men of the Protestant Reformation did with the art in their cathedrals. The great pictures of Holbein, for instance, were torn from the Munster in Basel because, forsooth, the Catholics had made a fetish of them. But now the people of that city exhibit the torn fragments of these pictures in their art gallery among their choicest treasures. Like the base Indian we are in danger of throwing away a pearl richer than all our tribe.

It is the effort to preserve everything that is sacred in the past that will make us creative and original; for originality in religious thought comes as it does in music by combining with a new rhythm and in new relationships the notes of the old, old scale. Here is the key to the future. Let us hold to our modern scientific outlook, but let us go back and recover the elements in the religion of our fathers that made it powerful and comforting. It was the reading of Paul that lighted the fires of the Protestant Reformation in Luther's heart; and it was the reading of the introduction to Luther's Commentary on the Romans that caused John Wesley's heart to be strangely warmed. And so in like manner will our torch be lighted from the fires of the past. If we wish for a new day, we must combine our new discoveries with the old values. Then we shall be "like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

It was this determination to hold fast to every value in the past that constituted the greatness of Jesus. He realized that the smaller and more insignificant aspects of truth are often more vital than they seem. They are like the ductless glands in the body, comparatively small, but absolutely necessary to health. The way to be a small man, says Jesus, is to neglect a small commandment. "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven."

Often it seems impossible to combine the apparently contradictory truths that come down to us.

They are backed by the witness of the great lives that have been nourished upon them, and yet they seem to cancel one another out. But it is by the combination of opposites that the miracles of the new spiritual chemistry will be worked.

How contradictory the three great expectations of the prophets! One group prophesied a Messiah, the son of David, who would reign in glory over Israel and reform the nation by a just government. Another proclaimed the apocalyptic coming of the Son of man, a supernatural Deliverer who would suddenly come down from the clouds and save the righteous from their oppressors. And still another looked forward to a Suffering Servant who would bear the iniquities of the people and be led as a lamb to the slaughter.

These three hopes were strident contradictions. How could a man be the son of David, and yet come down from heaven? How could he be a supernatural deliverer, and yet a suffering, dying martyr?

Jesus felt that each of these hopes was inspired of God, and hence that he must fulfill them all. Our Lord's expectation of a sudden, supernatural coming is often referred to half-apologetically by scholars, as though it were a sign of his mental limitations. And it would be a sign of his mental limitations if that had been his one great idea. But when we find him holding to it in connection with the vision of Messiah's renovation of society by good government, and the vision of the redemption of society by the martyrdom of the holy and faithful remnant, it is an indication of his supreme mental balance. For society cannot be saved by the conquering reformer, on the one hand, or by the martyr, on the other, unless the cosmic forces intervene to snatch victory out of defeat. (That is what is meant by apocalypticism. It says, If you will be faithful, and teach and preach and suffer, in due time God Almighty will bring on his huge artillery, and help you to subdue the forces of evil.)

It was because Jesus had the daring and reckless faith that he could fulfill not merely one, but all of the inspired hopes of the past, and was willing to pay the penalty of the cross to carry out his purpose, that we have the Christ who fulfills our every need.

Merciful Father, we thank thee for the record of all those who have toiled and suffered for thy Kingdom in ages past. We thank thee for the story of the victory which thou didst give them, and for their immortal hopes and convictions. Especially we thank thee for the Book which enshrines the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to read it continually, that he may appear unto us as our living and present Leader. Inspire us through thy Holy Word to daring thought and deed, and may we set out like the men of old for the country which we are to receive for an inheritance, risking all to the guidance of thy Holy Spirit. And this we ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

JESUS AND HIS CHALLENGE TO FAITH

He prayeth best who loveth best
  All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
  He made and loveth all.
—*Coleridge.*

Whenever I have had an opportunity to know the inner life of any man who has accomplished great things for God in the world, I have discovered that prayer has not only been a prominent, but the dominant, activity of his life.—*John R. Mott.*

JESUS AND HIS CHALLENGE TO FAITH

THE KINGDOM IS AT HAND. BEGIN NOW!

THE Jews were eagerly looking for the kingdom of God. Around the doors of their little stone houses groups of peasants would gather and talk in hushed tones of how the Messiah would soon come and drive out the Romans, and lead his people on to conquest and glory. He would also punish the rich Jews who oppressed them, put down the hypocritical high priests, and restore true religion. But alas! they sighed, we must wait. Nothing can be done until the Messiah appears.

Now Jesus glowed with a hope more intense than any of them. So contagious was it that as soon as his fishermen disciples fell in with him they began to dream of empire, and to quarrel among themselves as to who should be prime minister. He differed from his fellow Jews in that he felt that the Kingdom could begin now in the hearts of men. This is the uniqueness of Jesus. Everything was to begin now. When he met the blind man he did not say, We must wait till I go to the apothecary and procure materials for a magic salve, and then with proper ceremonies I will anoint your eyes. No, he spat on the common ground beneath his feet and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man.

That story is a symbol of Jesus' constant attitude toward life. (John 9. 1-12.)

You are poor? says Jesus. Do not let that discourage you. "Blessed are ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God." You can move the golden furniture of heaven into your hovels at once, and set up as princes of the new Kingdom. You are persecuted for righteousness' sake? Persecutions need not daunt you. They are rather the signal that you should begin to dance. Let the music begin. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Evil circumstances were to Jesus not a signal to wait for better times. They were God's command to manifest his power to transform the environment, or perhaps to glorify him still more by spiritual joy and victory in spite of the handicaps.

THE THREE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

Repentance

Three conditions Jesus laid down for entering into the great blessings which God was ready to bestow upon men. The first is repentance. A man must clean house and put aside all willful wrong. He must square himself with his conscience. Before he receives the new light he must become loyal to the light he already has.

Watchfulness

Another key to the Kingdom is perpetual watchfulness, because many of God's blessings must be seized instantly or not at all. And what makes it more difficult, these blessings often come disguised. It is only the sharp eyes that notice the king's purple beneath the peasant's coat.

Not enough has been made of our Lord's command to watch. By watchfulness Jesus means a continual expectation of some wonderful opportunity which is liable to be presented at the most unlikely time. Watchfulness involves study, and an habitual attitude of putting one's whole mind and will upon the subject in hand, so that when a crisis comes, as the boys say, he will be "all there." The watchful man to-day is the one who listens to the world's prophets, and reads the world news with the eyes of a detective in search of a criminal for whom a great reward is offered, for he knows that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

With the surrender of the peculiar type of millenial hope that characterized the first century, we have, alas, also lost their awed sense of being on the verge of some mighty and glorious manifestation of God. But the fact that we cannot picture the second coming of Christ with the imaginative background of an age that lived on a flat earth, under a solid firmament just above which was the heaven of God, is no reason why we should cease to expect God suddenly to manifest himself in a most marvelous way. Indeed he has been doing that very thing lately in the realm of science. He has spoken to one man and taught him how to make a machine by which he could fly like a bird through the air. He has spoken to another and taught him how to send a wireless telegram across the seas; and to still another, and showed him how to make a speaker's voice carry through mountains and across plains, into cities and lonely farmhouses scattered over thousands of miles.

How these scientists put us to shame for our lack of great expectations! It begins to look as though the prophet of the future would not come to us in the monk's cowl or the clergyman's garb, but in the rubber apron of the laboratory. The scientific investigator seems to say to us, I am excited with the hope of releasing the power of the atom. Why are you not excited with the hope of releasing the power within the human soul? I spend time and money trying to make a new discovery. Why are not you doing the same? I try constant experiments. Why do not you? Most of them are failures, but that only means that I must try again. Why do not your failures mean the same thing to you? In the midst of my endless negative results there comes now and then a positive discovery that astonishes the world. Why do not you astonish the world? Is there more power in matter than in spirit?

Prayer

The third condition which Jesus laid down for inheriting the Kingdom was prayer. Jesus did not enter into any philosophical explanation of prayer. His argument for it was chiefly in the fact that he himself prayed, and God amazingly answered his prayers. In our discussion we will confine ourselves to two questions: What we may pray about, and What we must do if we expect our prayers to be heard.

WHAT TO PRAY FOR

In the Lord's Prayer we have a very simple statement of what we may pray for. This prayer was intended primarily not as a form of prayer, but rather as a general hint as to the things for which a Christian may properly make request.

It has been said that the Lord's Prayer falls into two divisions. The first asks for the glory of God, and the second for the good of men. The division is quite artificial, of course, for whatever is for the glory of God is for the good of men, and whatever is for the good of men is for the glory of God. And yet it is plain that in the first part of the prayer our thoughts are directed away from ourselves to those larger issues which have to do with the exaltation of God, while the latter part expresses our conscious and clamorous personal needs.

Our Father Who Art In Heaven

When we begin to study the Lord's Prayer we are struck immediately by the word *our*. True prayer must commingle petitions for ourselves and the brotherhood. When a man prays he is to feel his oneness with humanity. An automobile rides easier when the seats are all occupied; so likewise our prayers go better when they carry the burdens of humanity.

And when we pray we are to say *Father*. That is the very heart of Christian prayer. To think of God as a Father is not always easy. When one is out on the sea, tossed by a dark expanse of cold, insensate, heartless ocean, it is difficult to feel that back of all the waves there is an infinite, kindly heart. But that is just the intellectual adventure to which Jesus calls us.

He himself said Father under the most difficult circumstances in which it was ever uttered. He had lived a life of absolute loyalty but God left him alone to die on the cross amid the jeers of his enemies. The darkness settled down upon him like a pall, but after a cry of complaint and desolation he summoned himself, and died, saying, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." And somehow since then it has seemed possible for his followers to say "Father" even when it looks as though God were against them.

The whole modern tendency to speak of God as though he were a huge automatic complication of natural laws, is diametrically opposed to Jesus' teaching. No man was ever so absolutely certain that God could be depended on to act after a certain manner if man fulfilled the conditions. In that sense he was the great champion of the reign of law. But to speak of God as a mechanism would have filled Jesus with horror. He is your Father! he would have exclaimed.

Of course, Jesus understood that God did not have the limitations of the human personality. But when we say that God does not have the limitations of the human personality, that does not mean that he is impersonal. It means that he is super-personal. God is so personal that he can think of us all, all the time, and he can think of each of us with an attention as perfect as though we were the only persons in the universe. There is a great deal more of God than that which we visualize when we conceive of him as a person, but he is at least personal. In him is all the tenderness and thoughtfulness and graciousness that we associate with the highest type of personality.

Hallowed Be Thy Name

But, says Jesus, whenever you pray to your Father you should say, "Hallowed be thy name." You may be familiar with him as with an earthly father, but your hearts should be filled with awe. Your whole soul should go out in fervent prayer for the lifting up of his holy name. This is the chief need of humanity—to be awed with a sweet sense of the infinite holiness and majesty of God.

Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done

After we pray for the hallowing of the name of God we are to pray for the coming of God's reign upon the earth. It is somewhat fashionable to-day to deprecate prayer on the ground that it is an attempt of an ignorant creature to tell Infinite Wisdom a better way to run the world. But that is not true prayer. Such criticism springs from profound ignorance of the mind of Christ. Prayer is rather an attempt to co-operate with God in getting his will done. True, God can swing the planets without man's aid or advice, but when he is dealing with free human beings whom he has made in his own image, the things he most desires to have done are things that he can accomplish only when his children gladly and freely co-operate with him. He could make physical descendants of Abraham out of cobble stones, said John the Baptist, but to make an Abraham requires the answering loyalty of a great faith.

And note the scope of this prayer. Every Christian every day is to pray for the whole world, and he is not to pray merely that men may begin to be respectable and decent, but that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. The prayer is to have the widest possible reach, and the highest possible aspiration. Thus from the cities of Europe and the farms of America, the homes of the Chinese coolies and the kraals of the Africans, is to go up a prayer for the universal spread of the kingdom of God.

This was Christ's way of releasing men from their chains. No matter how they were hemmed in by the prison bars of circumstances, they were henceforth to lead a world life in their prayers, at least, and this in time would mean a world life in their sympathies and thoughts. And now that the world is drawn so close together the humblest can also live a world life in his activities. Christ gives wings to everyone who believes in him.

> "Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
> Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
> Can be retentive to the strength of spirit."

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

But Jesus realized that most men like himself have scarcely a day's provisions between them and destitution. So he comes down from glorious world-wide idealism to the craving in the stomachs of his disciples, and puts into their mouths the prayer, Give us this day our daily bread. And this means also shoes and coats and fuel and rent, and school books for the children.

Some people believe that the world is a mechanism, and that therefore it is vain to pray about physical things. They say, I will pray about the things of the spirit, but I can no longer pray about physical things which are subject to natural law. This sounds quite advanced and scientific. But of course these very people will themselves pray for physical things whenever they get into desperate trouble. And the fact is that we are so closely enmeshed with matter, and everything is so conditioned by the physical, that really there is logically no room for prayer at all if we shut it out from any relation with the state of our bodies.

A great many things happen in the world of matter because we work and strive. A garden plot will grow up with weeds unless we spade it and plant it, and give it good care. And what is prayer but a form of working in the garden of God?

Prayer for daily bread is as important to the rich as to the poor. It is the curse of riches that wealthy men so often stop praying earnestly for their daily bread. They do not receive it as from the hands of God, and hence it has no spiritual significance to them. Indeed, it becomes a kind of ptomaine poisoning. Some men, says Lowell, have the sense of God fattened out of them.

God intended bread to be a kind of sacrament of his love, a means of grace, a spiritual uplift. It is said of the apostolic church that "they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart," and this gladness not a little of it came because they regarded their food as heaven sent. A college boy takes peculiar delight in a little box of food sent from home. It may not be any better than that which he is getting at his boarding house, but he would hotly resent such a suggestion, because the food to him symbolizes the love of his mother. So ought our food to symbolize to us the love of God.

Forgive Us Our Debts

And when we pray if we are honest we always have to deal with the fact of sin. One might suppose that the better a man gets the less he will need to pray for forgiveness. But the opposite is true. The world's greatest saint doubtless prays this prayer more earnestly than any of us, for he realizes how good God is, and hence how much the Father would have done for him and through him if he had only believed more perfectly; and at this thought he is overwhelmed with shame. In the light of the sacrificial love of God anyone's life seems sinfully selfish and easy-going.

Bring Us Not Into Temptation

And then Jesus says that we are to pray, "Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." This is a prayer for deliverance from sorrows and losses too great for weak human nature to stand up against, and a prayer against those asphyxiating and subtle influences that stupefy our souls ere we are aware. It asks that we may be saved from facing crises when we are not in the physical condition to think clearly and resolutely. It begs God to keep us from drifting into social situations where the current is too strong against us, and we are liable to be taken off our feet.

God has made the world so that if we watch and pray, the buffetings of life will simply add to our strength. But he has also made the world so that these same buffetings will overcome us if we do not pray, Lead us not into temptation. God has placed within us passions and appetites which are for our good, but which become a means of sin the moment we cease watchfully and prayerfully to strive to keep them in their proper place. And in that sense he does lead us into temptation if we do not pray against it.

One should especially note that we are to do more than pray that we ourselves should be kept from the undertow; we are to pray that the whole brotherhood may likewise be protected. It is a prayer that the church and society and the state may combine to make it easy to do right and hard to do wrong.

THE CLAMORS OF THE SOUL

We said at the beginning that the Lord's Prayer expresses the full content of our supplication. In a sense it does. But there is also a wide range of subjects of prayer which are quite legitimate when we add, If it be thy will. We want some things so very badly that it would be a pity if we could not talk to God about them. And there is absolutely nothing that we may not pray for if we pray submissively. Jesus prayed that he might be delivered from the cross, but added, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." And his prayer was wonderfully answered when the angel came strengthening him.

And there is another type of prayer that God in his infinite mercy allows us. Jesus on the cross exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And all his followers have experiences in which their souls cry out in protest and clamor. It is only in the presence of a very kindly father that a child dares to whine. Our heavenly Father is infinitely kind, and allows us to sob out our protests against his providences. Many of the psalms begin in clamor and end in praise. The reason is that the frank expression of our doubts and complaints before God somehow relieves the soul, and leads to a reaction wherein the tide of faith and joy comes back. It is dangerous to crowd down our complainings; we had best utter them in prayer, and thus put ourselves into the hands of the Great Physician.

HOW TO PRAY SUCCESSFULLY

1. *Take Time to Pray.*

Although Jesus laid down no rules about fixed seasons of prayer, his own example shows that he insisted on times of prayer at all hazards. After his exhausting day of miracles in Capernaum, when the importunities of the sick had kept him up to a late hour, we are told that he arose a great while before day and went out into the desert and prayed. (Mark 1. 35.) Utter physical weariness was to him no reason why he should not spend time in prayer. He had learned the deep secret that ofttimes the best remedy for extreme weariness of body and mind is a vigil. Sometimes men are so completely exhausted that it is not safe to sleep until they have drawn great draughts from the wells of prayer. When people come down in the morning with a great light in their faces, it is often due not to the number of hours of sleep they have had, but to a long vigil wherein they have tapped the deeper springs of spiritual vitality. Jesus allowed the pressure of the crowds to change his program in many ways, but one thing the crowds were not allowed to do, and that was to keep him from times of leisurely communion with God.

2. *Forgive and Make Restitution.*

In his teachings about prayer Jesus especially stresses the duty of forgiveness. When a man comes into the presence of God to be forgiven, he must forgive, because forgiveness is being taken back into fellowship with God, and fellowship with God means feeling as kindly toward men as God feels toward sinners. Moreover, we are not to feel easy in our prayers if we are conscious that anyone has a cause of complaint against us. Jesus insists that when we are reminded at church that we have wronged a brother we shall not even wait for the meeting to be dismissed before we go and make things right. Matthew 5. 23, 24.)

3. *Be Humble.*

Our Lord's picturesque parable of the Pharisee and the publican brings out a supremely important condition of successful prayer. The slightest trace of self-righteousness is like the carbon on the spark plug. It destroys the connection.

We are to expect an answer not because we deserve it, but because we are talking to a gracious God. Prayer is a daring assumption of God's generosity. We are to come boldly to the throne of grace "that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." This is part of what Christians mean when they pray in the name of Jesus. Jesus stands for God's infinite willingness to bless us in spite of all our past sins.

And if one is praying to God, how absurd it is to make requests for anything small. If one were going to a millionaire for a gift, and finally had succeeded in gaining access to the great man, it would be almost insulting to take his time to ask for a mere trifle. How much more with God! A certain bravado is necessary in prayer, which seems like presumption, but which indeed is the highest form of humility. For the man who asks great things is not at all measuring his request by what he deserves, but by what he believes God in his mercy is willing to do. It is impertinent to draw a five-cent draft on the bank of heaven!

4. *Feed on the Scriptures.*

As a heartener to his faith a man should have in memory many beautiful forms of prayer. John Hutton once said that the first task of a young minister should be to commit to memory a good share of the book of Psalms. Our moods are so flat and dull that it is often necessary to quote Scripture to ourselves a long while before the airplane of faith will rise. Many psalms and Bible promises well memorized act as a kind of an aviation field for getting started on our upward flight. When men most need to pray they are often too fagged and disturbed to compose prayers, and it is exceedingly important that at such times the storehouse of memory should supply them with perfectly familiar forms of supplication.

The importance of this can hardly be overestimated. An instructed Roman Catholic has so many prayers committed to memory that when he goes into a church for an hour of private worship he knows precisely what to do. But what will the average Protestant do if he resorts to a church for an hour of prayer? It is the shame of our religious education that he will be so much at a loss.

5. *Be Persistent.*

What is a man to do when he prays and prays, and nothing happens? This is especially apt to be the case when we are praying for other people. The more we pray the worse they often seem to get. Jesus says men "ought always to pray, and not to faint." When prayer seems to be utterly unavailing we are often just on the verge of a great manifestation of the power of God. In things spiritual it is profoundly true that the darkest hour is just before the dawn. Men frequently throw down their picks but a moment before they would have struck the gold-bearing gravel.

Two parables Jesus used to impress the power of persistence in prayer. "Which of you," says he, "shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee? I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth." (Luke 11. 5-8.)

This is the lesson of the parable: If at the most inconvenient hour of the day we can get a favor from an unwilling friend by just keeping at him, how much more can we get a favor from God, who is more willing to give than we are to receive, and to whom no time of asking is inconvenient!

The same point is again picturesquely illustrated in the parable of the unjust judge. (Luke 18. 1-8.) He had no conscience, and was wholly indifferent to public opinion. Now there was a widow who came unto him saying, "Avenge me of mine adversary." And he would not for a time. But the widow kept coming; his curt refusals did not daunt her. Finally the matter got on his nerves, and he said, "Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith." If the worst conceivable type of a judge can be moved by a poor widow who has no bribe in her hand, and no one to plead for her, if such a judge can be moved by such a suppliant, how much more will your heavenly Father deliver you, seeing that you are his own chosen ones, and instead of being hard and indifferent he is ever long-suffering with your infirmities! To Jesus it seemed simply preposterous to think that our heavenly Father would not hear the prayer of his oppressed children. "I say unto you," says he, "that he will avenge them speedily."

It must be that he is looking at life as an old man looks back on it, and it seems to him that his days have been as a handbreadth. Comparatively speaking, said he, it will be no time at all before you will experience the glorious results of your intercession. Paul was looking at life from the same standpoint when he spoke of "our light affliction, which is for the moment."

When the Syrophœnician woman followed Jesus, begging him to cure her little daughter, he saw something in her strong face that assured him that she had great resources which it would be inspiring to bring out. So "he answered her not a word." Finally the disciples come to him in distress saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us." We are not quite sure whether they meant, Pity the poor thing and heal her daughter, or, Rebuke this heathen and get rid of her. Anyhow Jesus decided to take the hard attitude of a race-proud Jew, and play the heavy villain in this little drama, in order to be a foil to set off the woman's faith. So he said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." And now the woman has her chance. Her eyes flash, and she says, "Yea, Lord: for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." A great light spreads over the Master's face. The woman had not disappointed him. And so he says, "For this saying go thy way; the demon is gone out of thy daughter." (Matthew 15. 21-28; Mark 7. 24-30.)

Here we see that persistence took the form of shrewd, undaunted repartee in the face of a rebuff. Prayer has a thousand forms. It is effort on its knees. It is activity awed by a sense of the overwhelming power of God. It is work that counts itself as nothing because it is "God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure."

One often hears it said, Why should it be necessary to ask God over and over for a thing? Why not simply make your request known and leave it there? The answer is that there are certain spiritual graces whose possession is simply bound up with persistent effort and aspiration. It is only after the long waiting and striving that a man becomes capable of receiving these blessings. Persistent prayer is a part of the process of growing up to a capacity to enjoy the answer. It is like a little boy's long and patient saving up for a bicycle. It is good that it takes time for him to earn the money for it, so that his legs may have time to grow long enough to reach down to the pedals.

Furthermore, it is not in prayer alone, but in all the rest of life that the law of the long striving and waiting prevails. A youth wishes to be a violinist, and God has ordained endless repetition of the exercises as a condition of success. He must pray patiently and fervently to be a musician by practicing hours every day. Now prayer is the expressional aspect of the yearning of the whole nature for God. Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." You are to reach out for the blessing in every conceivable way, and your ingenuity is constantly to devise new ways.

And thus we see that persevering prayer, although it seems to resemble vain repetition, is really at the opposite pole, for vain repetition is prayer in which the whole man is not enlisted, while real persevering prayer means the striving of the entire man to the last limit of his power.

6. *Take the Answer for Granted.*

Faith is exercised not merely in believing that God is going to do great things in the future, but in assuming that he has already heard us. Jesus said, "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark 11. 24.) By that he meant that we often have to take for granted that our prayers are answered without any consciousness of an inner change which our faith has wrought, or any outward effect upon our fellowmen.

The story about the ten lepers who besought Christ for healing, perfectly illustrates what happens continually in the prayer life of sincere Christians. They were told, "Go and show yourselves unto the priests," and get your health certificate. And the record says that "as they went, they were cleansed." They had to start for their health certificates without any internal evidence that they were better. But as they approached the place where they were to be inspected the disease departed from them. (Luke 17. 11-19.)

Often when an expert oculist fits us with glasses it seems at first that they will not do at all. But if we believe that the glasses are right, and wear them a little while, they prove themselves to be just what we need. That is precisely what we must continually do in our prayer life. We must assume that the answer is right, and then in time we shall see plainly that it was right.

If an uncultured community that had suddenly been enriched by striking oil, were to send an agent to Europe to buy pictures for their new art gallery, and he should acquire some great masterpieces, the people would be sure to be disappointed in them. They would have to have the pictures in their midst for months before they grew up to an appreciation of them. So it is with God's answers to our supplications. He always gives us something bigger and better than we foresaw, but it requires faith at first to believe that they are bigger and better, just as it required faith for the generation to which Jesus belonged to believe that the plainly clad carpenter who stood before them was a fulfillment of the highly colored and glorious Messianic dreams of the old prophets.

FAITH WITHIN THE REACH OF EVERY MAN

The faith which Jesus is enjoining upon us is something entirely within the reach of every man. Faith is simply assuming that Christ is alive, and will give us the needed reenforcement. It is as though a little child, deciding that a mountain ought to be moved, should take his toy wheelbarrow and his tin shovel and little red bucket, and go to the foot of the mountain and begin the work, singing merrily meanwhile about God's big steam shovels that are soon to appear. That is precisely what great faith means. It is starting on a needed task with the inadequate means at hand, and singing as we work of the great things that God is going to do. Every man can begin to use his little means for God's great ends, no matter what may be his intellectual difficulties or his physical weakness. Sometimes the men who have the greatest faith are beset with the biggest swarm of doubts, but they do not allow their doubts to swerve them from their brave course. Courage in spite of misgivings—that is faith!

Wherefore Dost Thou Doubt?

Some people say that they will be glad to believe in prayer if we will bring them an argument scientifically to prove that God answers it. If they mean by this to prove it as one proves a mathematical theorem, or makes a demonstration in chemistry, one cannot prove any of the beliefs that make life full of richest meaning. He cannot even prove that his mother loves him, or indeed that he is his mother's son at all. And yet he proposes to go on believing that his mother loves him and that he is her own son. Why not also go on believing in prayer?

Would it not be more sensible to say, I have an instinct to pray; mankind has been praying almost as long as they have been breathing, and they have found great help from it. I will therefore pray unless you give me overwhelming proof that God does not answer prayer. Certainly no one can give that, any more than he can give a mathematical proof that he does answer prayer.

We must decide to pray, or not to pray, and the decision must be made without the possibility of proving beforehand that we are right. The difference is that if we decide with Jesus to pray, life takes on a great richness. Enormous comfort comes to us in times of trouble and sorrow. We rise out of moods of weakness conscious that we are new men, and rejoice as a strong man to run a race.

The fact that there are mysteries about prayer is no scientific reason why we should stop praying until they are solved. If a man traveling over a lonely road were suddenly to be overwhelmed with the mysterious power of cold gasoline to propel a heavy machine, he would not stop there and refuse to go on until he had solved the problem. He would rather use his gasoline to go on into town, and then hunt up a physicist and ask for an explanation. The only possible explanation of prayer will come as the result of the vitality which we get from praying.

Paul could not have explained the mystery of prayer, but that did not keep him from utilizing its power. When in prison, knowing that at any time a squad of Roman soldiers was liable to take him out to execution, he wrote to the Philippians a word out of his own immediate experience. And this is what he said: "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4. 6, 7.) A power that will do that for a man in the face of the headsman's axe is something eternally and gloriously real.

Lord, teach us to pray. We know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. We thank thee for this confidence. Thou hast told us to ask largely that our joy may be full. Enlarge our hearts that our prayers may embrace the whole brotherhood of thy children, and reach out to those who are in darkness and in sin. Fill our minds with thy heartening promises, that we may have courage to believe that our prayers are heard. And may we all set our faces like flint to take for granted the answer to our petitions, in spite of all the contradictions of life.

And this we ask in the name of Him who, even in the bitterness of death, held steadfastly to his faith that God had heard his supplication. Hear us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

JESUS AND EARTHLY GOODS

Part I

". . . I had rather coin my heart,
And drop my blood for drachmas, than to wring
From the hard hands of peasants their vile trash
By any indirection.

—*Shakespeare: Julius Cæsar.*

JESUS AND EARTHLY GOODS

THE ACQUIREMENT OF PROPERTY

Earthly Goods the Gift of God

Back of all Jesus said about earthly goods was his sense of the love of the great Father who was the source of all things. His heart was continually full of gratitude. When he and his disciples were hungry, and faced by a hungry multitude, and they brought to him, half-laughingly, the five loaves and the two small fishes, he bowed his head and gave thanks for this absurdly inadequate supply for their needs. And this is only an example of his perpetual attitude as he looked at the beauties of the sky and earth, and received the common mercies of God.

These gifts of heaven all seemed sacred to him, and he could not think of wasting them. His words, "Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost," were doubtless spoken with more intense solicitude than we are accustomed to think. The waste of good food was to him like throwing the Communion bread into the garbage can. It was an insult to the Giver. And not only was it an insult to the Giver, but it was a form of stealing from the wretched and hungry masses of Palestine whose suffering weighed so sorely upon him.

JESUS A FOE TO POVERTY

It is surprising how much of his time Jesus spent caring for the bodies of men. If one were to take the cue from the Gospels, it would seem that this is also a large part of the Christian's duty. He should concern himself with the task of increasing the amount of food and comfort in the world, in order that great sections of the race may no longer have their souls starved out of them through perpetual anxiety about the necessities of life. The hands that fed the multitudes are lifted in benediction over every laboratory, and over every agricultural experiment station where men are seeking for knowledge that will add to our resources.

Jesus was not content merely to pick up the windfalls from the tree of God, and give thanks for them. He felt the urge of the command, "Conquer the earth and subdue it." Whatever we may think of the story of the feeding of the five thousand, it certainly expresses his characteristic attitude toward nature. It was one of resolute determination to bring out its resources, and to conquer its apparently hostile aspects.

HAPPINESS POSSIBLE IN SPITE OF POVERTY

Jesus would have had cordial sympathy with the physicist as with glowing dreams he experiments on the problem of releasing the power of the atom, and yet he knew that the race was everywhere surrounded with hard limitations which, for the time being at least, were inevitable; and he taught men how to make the best of these limitations.

Here is a curious paradox. Jesus hated poverty, and commanded the rich to share with the poor; and yet he said, "Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God." This does not mean that he saw any essential blessedness in the economic squalor of Palestine, but that he did see for the poor a glorious possibility of turning their limitations into a ladder that led them up to heaven. He illustrated this in his own experience. When he was nearly starved to death after his long fast in the wilderness, the tempter said to him, 'You must have bread; work a miracle." But Jesus answered, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He took it that, for the time being, the absence of bread was God's challenge for him to find nourishment from other sources. And so after the same manner Jesus said to the poor, "Let your hunger drive you to seek that bread of life which if a man eat thereof he shall never die."

Paul had learned the same lesson, for he says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4. 11-13.) A chemist said not long ago that coffee was a great blessing to the peasantry of Europe, for it enabled them to get along with their breakfast of black bread. Paul would say, "Christ is like that; I have learned to put up with anything through his strength."

SNEAK THIEVES TRANSFORMED INTO SNEAK GIVERS

While Jesus regarded the gifts of God as a family possession intended for the common use of all, and taught that no man should say that aught that he possessed was his own, he was far removed from allowing a man to say he possessed aught that was his brother's. He made a great difference between the spirit that knocks at the door of the poor and says, "Share," and the spirit which, with weapon in hand, knocks at the door of the rich and says, "Divide." Jesus respected the rights of property (Luke 18. 20), but for the most part he rebukes stealing not by condemning it directly, but by insisting that all men should become givers. He believed that the true way to cure a man of picking his brother's pocket was not by repression, but rather by teaching him slyly to fill the pockets of the poor and the hungry. Sneak thieves must be transformed into sneak givers. "Let not thy left hand," says he, "know what thy right hand doeth." (Matthew 6. 3.) Paul echoes the teaching of Jesus when he says, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need." (Ephesians 4. 28.)

BEWARE OF COVETOUSNESS

Jesus had much to say against the vice of covetousness. Now the evil of covetousness, of course, is not in its desire for property. Other things being equal, the man who desires property is better than one who does not. The sin of the covetous man is not that he wants things, but that he wants them at the expense of the rights and happiness of others.

Once, when Jesus was teaching the people, a man pushed his way into his presence and said, "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." (Luke 12. 13.) Covetousness had so coarsened his nature that he could not see the impropriety of asking Jesus to turn aside from his teaching and healing in order to help him get some money away from his brother. Jesus said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness." It is astonishing how much space is given in the gospel to the subject of the proper use of earthly goods. Jesus talks more about the danger of the love of wealth than about any other one thing. Most of what he said about heaven and hell was in connection with the use of money. (Matthew 6. 19-21; 25. 31-46; Luke 14. 12-14; 16. 1-10; 19-31.)

The apostles in harmony with our Lord put covetousness in the chain gang with the lowest vices. Paul says, "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry;

for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." (Colossians 3. 5, 6.) Our natural love for property is like the thyroid gland. Without it, we are abnormal; but if it is too active we have a spiritual goitre and are liable to be choked to death.

YE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON

Emphasis is put by Jesus on the fact that covetousness is a peculiarly deceptive vice. (Matthew 13. 22.) Hugh Martin quotes Xavier as saying that men had confessed to him every vice that he knew about, and some that he had never heard of, but he had never heard a man acknowledge that he was guilty of covetousness. The covetous man so little understands himself that, in connection with his grasping efforts for wealth, he often engages in intense religious activities. Indeed, the chief hindrances to the cause of Christ come from very active religious workers in whom the commercial motive is dominant.

There is, for instance, the big manufacturer who builds churches and endows colleges, but quite forgets to regard his employees as brothers whose happiness, self-respect, and mental and spiritual development should be among his chief concerns.

Jesus says that the man who attempts to serve God and mammon is sure to go blind. "The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

(Matthew 6. 22, 23.) A glance at history gives a lurid commentary on this saying. Think of the way in which prominent church members have fought practically every advanced step in legislation for the benefit of the working classes! Some even opposed the laws which forbade them to work little children in cotton mills fourteen hours a day.

No wonder Jesus exclaims as he thinks of the blindness of religious people whose hearts are set on riches, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

It makes one shudder to think of the evils that commercialism has wrought in the church. It was of men who push themselves into religious leadership for what they can get out of it, that Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." (John 10. 1.) Evidently he deemed a self-seeking ecclesiastic to be an own brother to the highwayman.

The most violent thing Jesus ever did was in rebuke of graft in religion. When he went into the temple and found men selling sheep and oxen under the pious pretext of furnishing the most perfect animals for sacrifices, he deliberately made a whip of small cords and drove them all out, and overturned the tables of the money changers. (John 2. 13-17.)

Human language could not express the intensity of our Lord's feeling against those who were dishonoring the service of God by their lust for money. The more religious they are, says he, the worse it is for them. "Beware of the scribes, . . . who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater condemnation." (Luke 20, 46, 47.)

Dante entered deeply into Jesus' outlook on this subject. Although a devout and loyal Catholic, he dared in his Inferno to picture three of the recent popes in hell because of their avarice. (Inferno, Canto XIX.)

FAITH IN PROVIDENCE AN ANTIDOTE TO MONEY MADNESS

One of the chief reasons why men try to serve God and mammon at the same time is that they are afraid to trust God to care for their physical needs. Jesus saw that the only way to encourage his disciples to give themselves recklessly to the glory of God and the good of mankind, was to breathe into them a faith in the minute personal oversight of the heavenly Father. The adventure of seeking first the Kingdom requires great courage, and courage springs from faith in Providence. The Mohammedans are great soldiers because of their belief that everything happens according to the decree of Allah, and nothing by blind chance. And the soldiers of Christ, while they cannot share in the Mohammedan conception of God, must likewise believe that the very hairs of their head are all numbered. In immediate connection with his exhortations against the attempt to serve God and Mammon, Jesus said, "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. . . . And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6. 26-30.) Sincere faith in these assurances would vaccinate men against the money fever.

One is loath to leave this point, for it is so little stressed to-day. Men do not seem to see that the present fashion of regarding the universe as a great blind mechanism cuts the very nerve of spiritual adventure. In these words about the birds and the lilies Jesus does not condemn shrewd foresight. His one point is: Never let fear of future want keep you from loving your neighbor as yourself. This is a universe in which it is safe to go in for the general welfare. God will look out for those who share with his other children.

SEEKING THE KINGDOM IN BUSINESS

It must not be thought that in commanding men to seek first the Kingdom, rather than money, Jesus was urging universal absorption in what we technically call religious work. On the contrary, the chief sphere in which men are to seek the kingdom of God is in their home life and in their ordinary bread-winning occupations. The Christian church has often made the mistake of seeking to push its activities and build up its own organization, rather than to establish the reign of brotherhood. It has not realized that the organization, quite as much as the individual, must lose its life in order to find it. Let every man's primary enthusiasm be to do business according to the Golden Rule; let every woman's burning zeal be consumed in reshaping her home life, and her social activities, after the principles of Jesus, then all at once church meetings and sermons and family prayers and Bible study will take on a new interest. Men will feel the need of the encouragement of the gospel, and be eager to share their experiences. There will be no more difficulty in getting a crowd at church than in gathering a crowd around the labor headquarters during a strike. The reason why church is so dull to many business men is that six days in the week their thoughts are engrossed in a type of activity that is not primarily concerned in helping people, but rather in getting money away from them. The whole week's work is organized around a scheme that is alien to that in which Jesus was interested, and hence inevitably at the end of the week they are not interested in Jesus. No man can be expected to thrill over that which is foreign to the daily trend of his thinking.

"Some day," said a merchant, "I hope to get enough money together to do something handsome for the church and missions." But his associates knew what his clerks thought of him, and they felt that he could do a thousandfold more for the church and missions if he would spend his thought and money on the problem of introducing into his great organization the helpful and kindly atmosphere of a big family. And that this was practicable, the notable accomplishment of a brother merchant in the very same city abundantly testified.

The chief need to-day is that we should demand the same standard of brotherly helpfulness in the industrial and commercial relations that we now demand of a minister. What would business men think of a minister who charged "as much as the market would stand" for conducting funerals among the poor? And are business men willing to admit that they belong to a lower order in society, and hence should be subject to a lower standard of morality? Nay, verily!

What we have been saying, however, does not mean that the minister or the professor is qualified to tell a business man just how the law of love should be applied in his business. That requires a technical knowledge of the details of the business, and of the economic laws underlying it. It will often happen that kindness requires an apparently cold-blooded procedure, just as kindness to the student often requires a hard hand in the classroom. And even the business man himself needs to do an enormous amount of thoroughgoing, co-operative study into the problems of commerce and industry before he reaches a satisfactory solution of many of his moral perplexities. Meanwhile there is need of great charity from onlookers who are not familiar with the stubborn facts and the multiform complexities of another man's job.

THE RESULTS OF APPLYING THE SERVICE MOTIVE IN BUSINESS

On the other hand, this does not imply that the resolution to "seek first the kingdom of God" in our ordinary, secular life would not work an immediate and extraordinary change. The most important aspects of duty often become obvious the moment we make the moral surrender. Suppose a merchant as he looked into the face of every customer that came into the store, began to ask himself the question, How in justice to other demands can I render him the greatest possible service? It would give a marvelous new glow to his day, and communicate an atmosphere of kindliness that would be highly contagious.

The writer will not soon forget the air of joyous Christian enthusiasm that characterized a recent gathering of prominent British manufacturers and merchants who were trying various experiments in introducing profit-sharing and co-partnership into their establishments. The meeting was not opened with prayer, and scarcely a religious phrase was used, but as they told of their various attempts to encourage their men to become partners in the business, one felt to a high degree the mystic presence of the Carpenter of Nazareth.

And what a change would be wrought in some of our factories if the workmen would make the general welfare more important than wages. Bitter experience with grasping and selfish employers has taught many working-men to adopt the principle:

Do the least possible work, and keep up a bitter fight for the greatest possible pay. One has great sympathy for them, knowing how often their whole-hearted service, instead of being met with appreciation, is apt simply to lead to heavier demands from the employer. He finds that they can do more than he thought, so now he says they must do more, and that, too, for no increase in pay.

And yet the present sullen attitude of thousands of workers makes their day very unhappy. It is impossible to be happy when one is not doing his best. Furthermore, half-heartedness leads inevitably to mental and moral degeneration. If a man is a "wage slave," that is all the more reason why he should not develop the slave psychology. And sullen shirking is the mood of the slave. His only hope is that, in doing all things heartily as to the Lord, he should rise to that height of manhood and efficiency that will make it impossible for any man to enslave him. (Ephesians 6. 5-9.

THE GOLDEN RULE DEMANDS EXPERIENCE AND WISDOM

Of course, the enthusiast for the Golden Rule is like a sheep in the midst of wolves. Remember this, says Jesus, and be as "wise as serpents" as well as "harmless as doves." Your protection is in your brains. Some men imagine that if we were recklessly to put the Kingdom first in business it would imply that the banker must good-naturedly loan money to anyone who asked for it, and the merchant in his philanthropic zeal would have to sell goods for less than he could afford to. Thus business would go to the wall. Men are so afraid of Jesus' radical teachings concerning wealth that they do not dare face up with them, and so often have the absurdest notions of what they mean. The fact is, the words of Jesus are the very quintessence of practical sanity.

The complete dominance of the motive of service would often lead to a great tightening up of the screws and bolts in the way of economy. Men with an eye single to the service of God would have a peace of mind that would enable them to think far more deeply into their problems. One notes that the mission workers in the slums who are most unselfishly devoted to the poor, are less likely to be taken in by lying applicants for charity than the shrewd rich people who come down to assist them. Wholeheartedness has resulted in serpentine wisdom. One often sees this illustrated in the life of a great kindly business man. His single-hearted purpose to give every man a generous and square deal leads him into policies that are far shrewder from the business standpoint than the scheming devices of smart men whose only aim is the dollar.

In scientific investigation vast sums are expended in experiments which yield only negative results. The Rockefeller Foundation has probably spent millions in experimenting on cures for cancer, and as yet has found none. But if the work has been thorough the money is not wasted, for the experiments need never be repeated. Many experiments will be made in putting Christ into our commercial and industrial order, and there will be many negative results because we have not understood the underlying economic and psychical laws. But gradually men will hit upon the secrets, and the new day will begin to dawn.

RECENT PROGRESS PROMISES GREAT DEVELOPMENTS

Think of the advances that business has already made. Take, for instance, the policy of one price to all customers.

"How much is that scarf?" asks the Mediterranean tourist in the bazaar.

"Ten dollars, Lady."

"I'll give you five," says the lady.

After much talk the merchant finally gives it up with a feigned reluctance, but one can see his eyes shine with delight. He has made a great bargain. This is the conventional way of doing business in those parts, and the one-price method would seem to them quite impracticable. But we have found that it is in every respect better for the merchant and the customer. And we shall make other discoveries far more revolutionary than this.

That great department store which instructs its army of clerks that whenever a customer brings back an article or makes a complaint, they are always to assume that the customer is right, is adopting a policy that would seem madness to small men. And yet this store prospers apace. That is a successful experiment in applying the words of Jesus, "Give, and it shall be given unto you."

The little pile of newspapers at the street corner with the tin cup where the wee merchant expects you to deposit your pennies while he is gone to dinner, may be a bit of floating seaweed that presages the discovery of a whole continent of mutual confidence by and by.

SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN AMASS WEALTH?

Jesus only assured his disciples of bread and raiment. He himself had not where to lay his head. The merchant who carries out the principle of seeking first the Kingdom is nowhere promised business success. It is in heaven that his reward shall be great.

But suppose a man does actually begin to get rich in spite of his unflinching application of Christian principles. Such was the experience of the great clothing manufacturer of Cincinnati whom the people were accustomed affectionately to call "Golden Rule" Nash. Men looked on in amazement at his generosity with his employees, and the small margin of profit he was content to make from the public, and yet he found wealth rolling in upon him. What application does the word of Jesus, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth," have to such a case?

It is plain that our Lord's words were not an absolute prohibition of the amassing of wealth. It was the habit of Jesus, when he wished us to stress one thing less than another, to say, Do not do this, but do that. He said, for instance, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." (Luke 14. 12, 13.) It is plain that Jesus is not here prohibiting a man from entertaining his friends and his kinsfolk in his house. He is simply inveighing in his picturesque way against a selfish social life. Similarly here when he says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth," he is merely forbidding the amassing of money for selfish purposes.

There can be no doubt that in our present social order great good is often accomplished through the accumulation of capital in the hands of thoroughly public-spirited men. In many communities the man who builds the canning factory, and affords a market for the farmer, is not only an economic but a moral benefactor for the whole region. Church and school follow the business enterprise, and the prerequisite for all this was the accumulation of enough capital to make the venture.

But there are great dangers in the amassing of wealth, and these dangers can best be avoided by putting the emphasis where Jesus put it. His stress was not on the prohibition, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth," but on the positive command, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." His principle is: Never put any money into a bank save where a duplicate slip is issued to you at the same time from the bank of heaven. Then if the earthly bank breaks you will still have a good foundation against the time to come. To get this duplicate slip the deposit must always be made with a view to the general good and in a thoroughly unselfish spirit.

The acid test is this: Would I be unashamed in the presence of the great Teacher, and the barefooted fishermen that he gathered about him, and would I be glad to tell them all that I do with my money?

O Lord, our gracious heavenly Father, give us wisdom to seek first thy Kingdom. In all our dealings may we show that our aim is to glorify thee, and bless our fellow men. If our worldly goods are being multiplied, may we heed the Scripture which says, "If riches increase set not your heart thereon." If we are poor, deliver us from fretting over our poverty, and may our whole souls be gladly absorbed in laying up treasures in heaven. May we remember that thy Word is more to be desired than gold; yea, than much fine gold.

Prosper us in all our attempts to win our daily bread, and to supply the needs of ourselves and our families. And here and now we cast upon thee all anxiety about the things of this world, knowing that our heavenly Father will care for us abundantly according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Amen.

JESUS AND EARTHLY GOODS

PART II

"This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies.

—*Shakespeare: Hamlet.*

JESUS AND EARTHLY GOODS

THE STEWARDSHIP OF WEALTH

Be Just Before You Are Philanthropic

In the last chapter we discussed the application of our Lord's words to the acquirement of riches. We did not come to the problem of the man who finds himself already in possession of wealth. Of course, very few of us consider ourselves rich. There are always so many people who have more than we have, that we never take to ourselves the scriptural warnings to the rich. But there are very few people who will read this book who in the eyes of unnumbered millions throughout the world to-day would not be considered to be rolling in wealth. The penniless Arab who is taking his noon siesta on the bare ground by the roadside in Morocco, wrapped in a garment made of a coffee sack, would consider most of us Rockefellers. Even to Jesus himself, who was raised in a one-room house without windows, our surroundings would have seemed very luxurious indeed. What then does Jesus say to "us rich folks"?

As we have already suggested, he does not condemn us simply because we have in our possession some of this world's goods. The question he asks first of all is how we got our money, and then how it makes us feel, and finally, what are we going to do with it?

Once Jesus invited himself home to dinner with a rich publican of evil repute, and everyone was shocked and exclaimed, "He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner!" But Zacchæus was so overcome with our Lord's kindness in showing him attention, that he determined that Jesus should not be compromised for associating with him. So he stood up and said, "If I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man I restore fourfold." Zacchæus sensed exactly the mind of our Lord. It is not enough for people who have money that has been accumulated at the expense of the rights and welfare of their fellow men to become charitable. They must make restitution. "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." In God's sight nothing can go on in prayer or philanthropy until a man has made things straight with those whom he has wronged.

RICHES NEITHER PERMANENT NOR SATISFYING

But we will imagine that the money has been accumulated in the most legitimate manner. Jesus gives us such an instance. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully." That was surely a legitimate way of gaining wealth. It was the direct gift of God. But alas! the rich man did not feel this relationship to his heavenly Father. He did not take the fruits of the earth as a trust from the hands of the Most High. He reasoned with himself, saying, "What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry." (Luke 12. 13-21.)

We see that abundance of riches had given this man a sense of security. He thought he had "a sure thing." He looked forward to a long life of ease and luxury. We may rest assured that he did not give himself to prayer for, though one may go through the form, no one ever prays earnestly save when he has a profound sense of need. When inquiring what a man is worth, we often hear the answer, "Oh, he's independent." Well, that is precisely how this man felt, and there was the mischief of it. Wealth tends to make a man feel independent; and a feeling of independence, whether it be in relation to God or to man, is poison to the soul. It produces what the physicians call auto-intoxication. This man's life was turned in on itself.

His disease was complicated by his grotesque mistake in supposing that physical luxury could minister ease to his soul. Evidently he is already uneasy, for he says, "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, be merry." Men do not exhort themselves to be merry when they really feel that way. We notice that he proposes to drink as well as to eat, and we can be sure that the drink he had in mind was not water. A subtle sense of boredom settles down upon the idle rich, and they crave the artificial joy that comes from alcohol.

But this man had not considered the fact that even if his barns were not broken into, his own life hung by a thread. God said, "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" Suddenly the man with his barns full of wealth is a trembling pauper.

THE RICH FOOL UP TO DATE

The teaching of this parable is so obvious that comment on it seems to be an impertinence. The story has fastened itself upon the imagination of the race. One feels like a sinner to attempt to reduce its dramatic warning to prose. The better way, if possible, would be to tell the same story dressed in modern garb.

The man to-day who has more than he can use does not pull down his barns and build greater. He gives his property over to the care of some great trust company that invests it in such a varied and wide range of securities that, by the law of averages, it seems hardly possible that he should sustain serious loss. Then he goes on a Mediterranean cruise, and lives in princely glory in Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo, and when he tires of that he seeks the beauties of Florence and the glories of Rome. He decides that his health requires the use of light wines, and later on something a little stronger, and thus he becomes more and more luxurious, and repeats the old, old tragedy of the parable. He begins to have a nameless uneasiness, and then he consults a physician, and the physician reads him his sentence. It may not be "This night is thy soul required of thee," but it says all too unmistakably that his heyday is over. Or perhaps before he consults a physician, or realizes that anything is wrong, paralysis or apoplexy settles his case without the expense of a doctor's bill.

Nothing is more foolish, Jesus would say, than to trust in riches. If we expect them to bring happiness, they will disappoint us. A man who expects to satisfy his soul with eating and drinking practically calls himself a swine. Eating and drinking will satisfy a hog, but when an immortal soul determines to live in a psychological hog pen of mere ministry to the appetites, God always turns the hog pen into a hell.

IS GIBRALTAR SOUND?

But in another sense a man is a fool to trust in riches. The safest investments are uncertain. A great American insurance company for years advertised itself as "Sound as Gibraltar." But a British army officer recently told the writer that any great naval force that was willing to pay the price could reduce Gibraltar. Gibraltar is not sound. So it is with investments. No one knows this quite as well as the great business men. Nothing is sure about business, they say, save that things will change. And even if the investments do hold good as they often do, there is that much more uncertain quantity—the duration of life and health.

Jesus said, according to the Authorized Version, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." And this is profoundly true. But scholars tell us that the original has a little different slant which is brought out by Moffatt's translation: "A man's life is not part of his possessions because he has ample wealth." That is to say, wealth does not mean power to prolong life, or power to enjoy it. The rich man should continually say, "Thou hast made my days as a handbreadth; and my life-time is as nothing before thee;" and he should live accordingly. "Let your loins be girded about," says Jesus, "and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return from the marriage feast; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him." (Luke 12. 35, 36.)

The test, then, of a man's use of his wealth is this: Would death leave him poor? Any man who would be impoverished by death is being ruined by riches. But we all know men who are making such use of their wealth that if the news of their sudden call came to us we would not think of their being reduced to the level of the pauper. Fancy a big-hearted modern manufacturer whose main enthusiasm is the development of a workable and practicable scheme of profit-sharing and co-partnership with his employees. Would the angel of death come to him with the words, Thou fool! Nay verily, for his workmen will rise up and call him blessed.

BETTER INVEST IN GILT-EDGED SECURITIES

Jesus told a story to illustrate his idea of the proper use of wealth. It is in vivid contrast to that of the rich fool. It has given the commentators no end of trouble, because it is not what some people call a "nice" story, but it was very effective with his hearers because it was so close to their everyday life. (Luke 16. 1-13.)

The story is of a steward who had been wasting his master's goods, and was suddenly called upon to render his accounts and surrender his office. When he saw that he was to lose his position his one thought was, How can I during my brief remaining hold upon my job make friends who will take me into their houses after I am down and out? He decided with lightning quickness to reduce the bills which various men owed his master. Then, said he, the man who has to pay for only one half of the oil for which he owes will board me for a while out of gratitude for the money I have saved him; likewise also the man who owes for wheat. When the master found him out there was wrung from him an involuntary exclamation of admiration for the cunning of the rascal who had swindled him. Then of course he marched him off to jail.

Learn a lesson from this rascal, says Jesus; like him you have but a brief hold upon this world's goods. Use this filthy lucre in such a way that you may be received into the everlasting tabernacles. "The sons of this world," says he, "are for their own generation wiser than the sons of light." He does not mean by this that sinful men as a rule are more intellectual than good men. The unjust steward was a fool. He lost his position by foolish extravagance, and his grafting was quickly found out. The point is that for the moment he put more business foresight and promptness into providing for his future, than professed followers of God put into the matter of investing in heavenly securities.

A Chicago bank president said to the writer recently, "I persuaded our directors to put up a stately and expensive bank building. I said to them, 'It will cut our earnings for at least five years, but after that the benefits will be manifest.' A great bank must have an appropriate housing." That was good sense. And Jesus asks, why do not the children of God have similar good sense in suffering temporary loss for eternal gain, especially in view of the fact that they are liable to lose all their earthly possessions at any moment, and are sure to be called upon to part with them by swift-coming death? Religious leaders to-day ought to follow the example of Jesus, and greatly stress by multiplied illustrations the rebuke which foresighted modern business gives to our lack of the long view in things spiritual.

This emphasis upon the importance of using money as the key to unlock the gates of heaven, is but another instance of the immense stress Jesus laid on the importance of keeping the next world in view in our use of property.

HARD-HEARTED LUXURY LEADS TO MISERY

The parable of the rich fool brings out the folly of trusting in riches and looking forward to a life of selfish ease in their enjoyment. But there is another side to the story which is worse still. The rich man's banqueting usually goes on in the presence of gaunt misery and want. Jesus gives us another parable in which he portrays with his unique art the sin of luxurious living in the presence of hunger and wretchedness. The parable is like one of the old Italian masters. The more we contemplate it, the more we see the skill of the artist. (Luke 16. 19-31.)

"Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day: and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the *crumbs* that fell from the rich man's table; yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

Nothing is said about any immoralities of the rich man. It is not stated that he got his money by robbing the poor. It is not even intimated that he indulged in drunken orgies. He simply clothed himself in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, and neglected to do anything to relieve the suffering of Lazarus. Of course, it is likely that Lazarus got something from the garbage can, but his condition remained unspeakably wretched. He did not even have strength enough to drive away the dogs that came and added to his torture by licking his sores.

That is always the way when a man is down and out. Everything seems to be against him. The dogs represent the apparent hostility of nature to a man who gets caught in the swirl of adversity. The vermin no doubt seconded their efforts. God himself seemed to be against Lazarus. It is a wonder he did not curse God and die. Ten thousand other Lazaruses in a like situation do that very thing. That is why Christ hated extravagance so heartily. It meant that others must be in a condition so wretched as to make it exceedingly difficult for them to believe in a good God.

Lazarus must have had a sense of humor, else he could not have held out. One of the things that Dives missed was the quaint jokes he might have heard if he had gone out to fellowship with Lazarus.

Finally, however, nature succumbed. Lazarus died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Nothing is said of his burial. The soil is so rocky that it costs money to dig a grave in Palestine. Even the telegraph poles are often not buried in the earth, but are supported by huge piles of stone. There were plenty of dogs in Palestine, and you remember what happened to Jezebel.

After this the rich man died and was buried. He doubtless had a great funeral. But in the next verse we read, "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." The rich man had lived on what in American parlance we call "Easy Street," but it would here seem that "Easy Street" is a suburb of hell.

And the rich man "cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame." He cannot get over the idea that everyone was intended to wait upon him, especially men of the Lazarus class. But now he is informed that the social gulf between him and Lazarus which he did not attempt to bridge in this world, has become permanent, and now, alas! he is on the wrong side of it. Here again Jesus stresses the next world as the consideration that should determine our dealings in this. He would seem to say, Let no relationships exist between you and your wretched fellow men which you would not approve if your positions were reversed.

By natural law a man takes upon himself the wretchedness which he refuses to relieve, and the luxury in which he indulges at the expense of another's want is his own undoing. Doubtless Dives died of overfeeding and overdrinking, just as Lazarus died of undernourishment. The rich man repressed the impulses to pity, and went in for tickling his appetite. He insisted on having thrills, and the awful inexorableness of nature gave him a thrill for which he did not bargain.

THE MODERN DIVES

Of course, the modern Dives does nothing so crude as to feast with a man starving to death at his gate. He telephones for the ambulance, has the man taken to the hospital, and often in order to stand well with his guests he lets them hear him say over the telephone that he will stand good for the expenses. Christian spirit is slowly infiltrating into our lives, and even selfish men are required to do some good in order to gain admission to the clubs, and a standing in society. This notable improvement of the general social standards keeps many from recognizing their portrait in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. In order to keep a good name a man is now compelled to give to the community chest, and very likely, when it does not interfere with golf, he goes to an occasional meeting of the board of directors of a charitable institution. It looks well to see his name on the institution's letterheads. As he has plenty of money, what would be deemed a liberal check for charity costs him no sacrifice. So he lets his checkbook caddy his cross, and the plaudits he receives for his gifts cocaine his conscience against the realization of his essential selfishness.

But he is not left without premonition as to what is to happen in the future. Of how many a high-liver can it be said that already he begins to be "tormented in this flame." The newspapers are full of dark hints of the domestic tragedies of voluptuaries. Their unhappy faces reveal the turmoil in their soul. They say uneasily, with Richard the Third, "I have not that alacrity of spirit I was wont to have." Jesus simply says, The thing goes right on in the next world, and like everything else, it develops. Even in this world there is a great gulf fixed between the comforts of the gospel and a man who has grown old in selfishness and luxury. One needs only to sit down by the bedside of such a one, and attempt to stay his soul on God, to realize the appalling truth of that expression about the great gulf fixed. The capacity to believe in the love of God rots out of a man who, to use Paul's terrific phrase, has made a god of his own belly. (Philippians 3. 19.)

GENEROUS SHARING MEANS INEVITABLE HAPPINESS

The fact that the unselfish man inevitably becomes happy, while the man who will not share with suffering and need becomes inevitably and progressively unhappy, seems to have been central in the thinking of Jesus. It is this idea that is at the heart of the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. At the last great day, said Jesus, it will be as when a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." (Matthew 25. 31-46.)

One is struck with that expression, "the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." It suggests that the universe has been constructed to give happiness and power and dominion to people who are sympathetic. By natural law they enter into the joy of their Lord. The flames of hell itself could not make a loving heart unhappy. This is what Isaiah means when he asks, "Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" and answers that it is the just and the kindly man. (Isaiah 33. 14-16.) On the other hand, the universe so throbs with love that the man who is not sympathetic, and thus sets himself against the momentum of things, takes fire by the very friction.

When those on the right hand asked when they had served the king, they were answered, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." Jesus identifies himself with every needy soul. Hence our attitude toward them is precisely our attitude toward him. Here is the very heart of our Lord's teaching about the use of property. We are to share with our fellow men as though each of them were the Lord Christ, the great Giver of all things.

IS IT PRACTICABLE TO GIVE TO EVERY ONE THAT ASKS?

Our Lord's word to the rich is concentrated into one sweeping command, "Give to every one that asketh thee." The usual method of procedure is to tone these words of Jesus down into insipidity, and to make them mean something like this: Be as accommodating as you conveniently can. The true interpreter never tones Jesus down. That is the trouble with our commentaries. We try to turn the lightning flashes of Jesus into safety matches. On the contrary, our perpetual effort should be to convey by fresh illustrations and new coined analogies some conception of the glorious and fiery intensity of his words. Jesus spoke with a hilarious enthusiasm that is hard to imagine, and it is a crime to make him tame.

UNLIMITED LOVE THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE

But when we say that Jesus should not be toned down, we do not mean that he should always be taken literally. *Jesus' words are too intense to be taken literally.* He meant a lot more than, Give to every beggar that appeals to you on the street, and to every man who puts a subscription paper under your nose. Jesus is commanding unlimited love. To give a coin to a lazy beggar and encourage him in his idleness is not a kindness, but an ill turn. To subscribe to an inefficient charity is an unsocial act, for it wastes resources that are needed elsewhere.

And then we must remember that Jesus said, "Give to *every* one that asketh thee." In Tunis the writer asked Mohamet Ben Taib, a Christian Arab, what Jesus meant by this command. He said, "We must remember that there are others who ask besides these insistent beggars." He meant those suffering souls who are too considerate to push their claims, but who are looking to us in their wistful thoughts and hopes, and who are far more worthy to share our benefactions than the loud-mouthed suppliants. We should save something for them.

And then there are those whose relations to us give them a right to a large part of our earthly goods, the parents who have nourished us, the wife or the husband who has consented to share our lot, and the children whom we have brought into the world. And we must keep in mind also those who will be sure to ask of us to-morrow, and the next day, and the next.

Furthermore, we must always refuse an alms that weakens a man, or tends to make a beggar of him. Paul was in perfect harmony with Jesus when he said, "If any will not work, neither let them eat." (2 Thessalonians 3. 10.) Every gift to be a true benefaction should say to the recipient, Rise, take up thy bed and walk.

The costliest gifts are those which require as a preliminary the firm refusal of what the person asks, but as a substitute demand of us an expenditure of time and thought and effort that cost us much more than the gift desired. Jesus would have our whole life and thought to be one continual and generous giving of everything within our power for the benefit of all with whom we have to do.

But the very floodgate intensity of this command compels on our part the wisdom of a serpent, and demands a canny refusal to be victimized. Hence a cautious conservatism, instead of being an evasion of Jesus' great full-hearted principle of generosity, is required by it. The man who is not judicious and sensible in his giving sins against God and man.

PRODIGALITY SOMETIMES TRUE PRUDENCE

What we have just said, however, ought not to discourage an occasional prodigality in giving that seems to throw prudence to the winds. Sometimes to express our love we must break an alabaster box of precious ointment, as Mary did when she anointed the feet of Jesus. Judas was indignant, and said, "This ointment might have been sold for above three hundred shillings, and given to the poor." But Mary sensed the black shadow of death that was settling down upon Jesus, and her feelings could not be expressed by a prudent and moderate gift. And as a result not only the whole house, but the whole world has been filled with the odor of the ointment.

A physician with a materialistic outlook on life was motoring through Italy, and had just come with his companions from a visit to Assisi, the home of St. Francis. The monk who guided the party had been telling of St. Francis' absurd and prodigal deeds of liberality, all of them so much out of harmony with our modern notions of prudence. When the doctor got back into his car to resume his journey, he said, "This is a very strange atmosphere for me; but I must confess," he added, pointing to his heart, "it makes one feel very warm around here." Thus it sometimes happens that imprudence is the highest kind of prudence, for it is no small accomplishment to make a cynic feel very warm around his heart.

SOME MUST FORSWEAR WEALTH ALTOGETHER

We have been speaking of the Christian uses of wealth. Some men, however, are called to give it up entirely. The story of the rich young ruler is a case in point. (Matthew 19. 16-26; Mark 10. 17-22; Luke 18. 18-30.)

The young ruler must have been a noble youth. In spite of his wealth and official position he came running to Jesus and kneeled before him. Picture him there in his rich garments in the dust before the plainly clad peasant rabbi. We know also that he must have been a fine fellow, because it is said that Jesus having looked upon him, loved him.

But evidently he himself was conscious of a nameless lack. He knew that he had not found the deep secret. "What shall I do," said he, "to inherit eternal life?" Plainly he thought that he could perform some heroic act, and win the great prize as an athlete wins a trophy.

Jesus mentioned the simplest and most elementary duties. He would have him understand that eternal life was not in doing some extraordinary thing, about which a man could boast, but simply in doing that which would make him a good neighbor and a faithful friend. The young man answered, "All these things have I observed from my youth up." And we can be sure that he was not lying, for the Master does not rebuke him.

Then Jesus goes on to say, "One thing thou lackest yet: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." The stress here is not, of course, on selling all, but on following Jesus. The young man was invited to join the apostolic band. He was called to something greater than the life of a local land-owner and magistrate. He was offered the unspeakable honor of being one of the intimate friends of Jesus of Nazareth. If he had accepted, his form perhaps would have been emblazoned with the other apostles on the stained-glass windows of cathedrals all over the world, and we might now be reading in our New Testament the gospel according to the Rich Young Ruler.

Why did Jesus require him to sell all that he had? Not as an act of penance, or for the attainment of merit, but for somewhat the same reason that a man organizing a polar expedition would not allow one of his companions to take with him luxuries which the others could not share. Such a dangerous exploit would require the utmost comradeship. There must be no class divisions. The young ruler would be valuable only as he gave up everything that tempted him to feel above the husky band of brave youths who had gathered around Jesus. Furthermore, he must enter into the closest relations with the poor, and sleep with Jesus and the other disciples on the hard floors of their one-room houses. To have one of the group going about with his valet and a camel's load of changes of raiment would surely not be helpful.

DOES HIGHEST PERFECTION INVOLVE THE SURRENDER OF WEALTH?

The first question the modern Christian is apt to ask concerning these words of Jesus is, Does true following of Jesus to-day involve the surrender of property? Of course, the command to sell all and give to the poor, is not a universal rule. If all obeyed it, to whom would they sell their possessions? Nor is it the necessary condition of the highest sanctity. It is erroneous to imagine that God has one standard for ordinary folks and a special program for saints. A saint is simply a man who carries out the ordinary program in an especially delightful manner. But while Christianity is not always asceticism, as Professor Denney says, there must be an element of asceticism in the life of every Christian. He will always find that his peculiar temperament and calling demand certain sacrifices which are not demanded of all other Christians. A man may find that the possession of money is developing cancerous tissue in his personality, and he must have an operation.

But when a man has decided that the command does not apply to him literally, he has not in the least degree escaped the searching principle that Jesus here lays down. Indeed, he may have laid himself liable for a more difficult task in the management of his money in the interest of the Kingdom, than would have been involved in the joyful surrender of all that he had. The carefree life of one of "the Lord's merry men" like St. Francis or John Wesley, may be easier than the stewardship of great wealth.

PRINCIPLES REGULATING CHRISTIAN USE OF WEALTH

The following principles apply to every one who professes to be a disciple of the Nazarene:

1. *Money must serve.* All that a man has must continue to be used in the best possible way for the good of mankind. No rust must be allowed to gather on his possessions. James says to the rich, "Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire." (James 5. 3.) Every one must sell all he has and give to the poor, in the sense that he recklessly devotes all that he has and is to the service of those who need it most. As we have already suggested, this command could be obeyed quite as effectively by a superintendent of a great industry who is trying an heroic experiment in profit-sharing, as by a barefooted monk.

2. *Money must unite people, rather than separate them.* Every man is required to live such a life as will facilitate relations of easiest and most natural comradeship with God's poor. Any style of living that acts as a barrier to normal relationships with the mass of the people is unchristian. This of course is often more a matter of man's attitude than of his expenditures. Lincoln in the White House could still keep close to the people; another man would perhaps need to go down into a college settlement.

3. *Money must never keep men from higher things.* No man's possessions should ever be allowed to absorb energies which could be used more effectively in other pursuits. A Raphael, capable of painting

a Sistine Madonna, ought not to spend time in the management of a country estate. The world is too poor in art for that. An Edison just about to discover the secret of the incandescent lamp would have sinned against humanity if he had turned aside to spend a day sitting at a meeting of a board of bank directors discussing the problems of the stock market. And a Livingstone would have tarnished his fame if he had divided his energies between opening up Africa to the missionary and looking after his African mining interests. And this does not necessarily imply the slightest slur on the next man who goes to Africa and gets rich developing the mines.

Jesus left all, and had not where to lay his head. Plainly he would be less a Saviour if he had owned a country estate. To be the Christ of the coolie he must be made in all points like as he is. But we must not forget that Jesus and the apostles were much aided by people like Martha and Mary who had homes and possessions.

THE NEEDLE'S EYE

The young man went away sorrowful, we are told, for he was one that had great possessions. And Jesus turned to those that stood by, and said to his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." And as though that were not enough, he added, "Again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." This is a hard saying. It was meant to be hard. It takes dynamite to break up the hardness of men's hearts on the money question.

Some have thought that Jesus referred to a certain low and narrow gate in the wall of Jerusalem, which a camel passed through with great difficulty, and only after having his pack removed. But this is another case of making Jesus insipid. Jesus means a literal needle's eye, and a literal camel. He wishes to say that it is only by an astounding miracle that a rich man with the habits of luxury and pride can enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

Many rich men who have maintained a devout and humble Christian spirit have been kept so because they have been forced to live from hand to mouth in other respects. Often like Paul they have a thorn in the flesh which keeps them humble, or some great sorrow that drives them to the rock of refuge. The writer has known rich men who had wives who proved a sufficiently humbling discipline. The danger of riches is like the danger of anything else which tends toward complacency: great physical strength, great brilliance of mind, great fame, these all tend to pride, and are all dangerous in precisely the same way that riches are. But Providence often supplies some especially humiliating experience which acts as an antidote to the poison.

AS POOR, YET MAKING MANY RICH

We have been speaking of the rich man's duty to give to every one that asks, but we cannot leave the consideration of this command without noting that Jesus assumes that every one may be rich, and hence every one may obey this command. Peter and John, entering the beautiful gate of the temple, met the lame man who asked to receive an alms. But Peter answered, "Silver and gold have I none: but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." (Acts 3. 6.) Some of the world's greatest givers are men without money. One of these was Paul, who describes himself "as poor, yet making many rich."

The command to give to every one that asks, drives us at once to the command, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The man who finds himself without power to give should go at once to the bank and draw a large check on those riches of divine grace which are for rich and poor alike.

BIG DIVIDENDS

When Peter heard Jesus' words to the rich man, he said, "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee." Jesus answered, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time." (Mark 10. 29, 30.) This promise frankly does not seem to have been fulfilled in the case of many who have left all for the gospel's sake. Rather have they had the experience of Jesus himself who very soon after this incident was nailed to the cross. James, the brother of John, left all, and he received for his pains the headsman's axe. Paul, the greatest of the apostles, writes from prison in his old age, begging Timothy to bring him an old coat which he had left at Troas. Plainly he has no money to buy a new one.

And yet strangely enough, those in whose lives the promise of a hundredfold in this life seems least to have been fulfilled, are the last to question it. The reason is that absolute abandon to the work of Christ gives a strange thrill and enthusiasm, and a well-nigh miraculous capacity to enjoy life. This is where we stand on solid ground. Man was made for adventure, and it is only in the process of an adventure like risking all for the Kingdom that he really comes to himself. Man also was made for love, and when he shares all, he receives such a power to love that he scarcely knows himself, and this love amid all his persecutions elicits answering love. Thus his fellow men give back into his bosom "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over." His experience is like that of Jesus. He encounters persecution, but the affection he calls forth is of a unique sort, and makes life very rich.

All of these earthly joys are doubly sweetened by the consciousness that when they pass away far greater joys are in store. No man enjoys the earth until he fixes his chief hope upon the heavens. Othello exclaimed when he joined Desdemona, "I fear no joy like this succeeds in unknown time." The sweetness was spoiled by foreboding. The Christian's joy is increased by glad anticipations. He knows that it is the Father's good pleasure to give him the Kingdom," and at the center of the Kingdom is the King "on whom though now he sees Him not, yet believing, he rejoices greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank thee for thine abundant mercies, and we beseech of thee that thou wilt help us to keep very humble, and never allow the good things of God to minister to our pride and self-confidence. May we remember that our days are but as an handbreadth, and our life is as nothing before thee. May our hands be ever ready and eager to help our needy brothers, and thus may we use our earthly goods to obtain an abundant entrance into thine everlasting Kingdom both for ourselves and those with whom we share. And this we ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

JESUS AND THE FAMILY

“. . . Bid me lurk
Where serpents are; chain me with roaring bears;
Or shut me nightly in a charnel-house,
O’er cover’d with dead men’s rattling bones,
With reeky shanks and yellow, chapless skulls;
Or bid me go into a new-made grave
And hide me with a dead man in his shroud;
Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble;
And I will do it without fear or doubt,
To live an unstain’d wife to my sweet love.

—Shakespeare: Romeo and Juliet.

JESUS AND THE FAMILY

World-Wide Domestic Tragedy a Cry for Christ

As we take up the teaching of Jesus concerning the family it would be good if we might visualize for a moment the institution as it exists to-day upon the earth.

First let us go to Cairo where a man, although theoretically under certain restrictions, may practically divorce his wife at will, and where well-to-do Mohammedans who have arrived at the age of fifty are known to have had as many as twenty different wives. Try to picture the life of a woman under such a system. Think of her constant fear of being turned out on the street whenever an ugly mood possessed her husband. And think, too, of the brutalizing effect on the husband himself.

Then let us go south in the same continent to an African kraal where a chieftain has a great company of wives who are his slaves. Imagine the sweet home spirit that could dwell in such a place.

Cross over into Europe where in certain cultured nations men indeed have but one wife, but where the wife must grow accustomed to the common experience of having her husband form other connections according to his caprice.

Now come home to the United States and visualize the life of the smart set of New York City. Consider the appalling frequency of divorce throughout the republic, and the unashamed advocacy of companionate marriage by men of high station.

Glance at the conditions in Latin America where, although divorce is much less frequent than in North America, unfaithfulness within the marriage ties, or cohabitation without any tie at all is very common, and where heartache is written in plain letters on the faces of the women.

Cross the Pacific to Japan with its easy divorce and grim tragedies; behold China with its concubines. Look into the faces of those waiting women whose husbands have gone abroad for study, and who so frequently come home determined to send their wives away that they may marry women more on their intellectual level. And finally look at Russia, where a divorce can be gotten as easily as a marriage license.

Surely there is a reason in the world to-day for considering the problem of the family.

JESUS SHOCKINGLY SYMPATHETIC TO SOCIAL OUTCASTS

If Jesus had said nothing on the subject of the family, the general principles which he laid down and his whole attitude and spirit would have sufficed to guide us into right views concerning these matters. Paul was applying the spirit of Jesus to the family relations when he said, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it." The Golden Rule, applied in connection with a scientific study of the facts, would in time solve the chief problems of the home.

But fortunately Jesus said some very specific things about the relation of men and women in the home. Most of what he said was a surprise to his generation, and some of it quite shocking.

The Jews especially loathed the adulteress and the prostitute. Men counted it a point of righteousness to treat them with insulting contempt. We note this in the story of Simon the Pharisee. When the sinful woman came in to anoint the feet of Jesus, he said, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him." He thought Jesus ought to have kicked her away. It never remotely occurred to him that Jesus might have in mind her reclamation.

But Jesus took the part of the poor soul, and said, "Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." (Luke 7. 36-50.)

Another notable instance of his compassion toward these outbreaking sinners against social morality, was in the case of the woman taken in adultery. (John 8. 1-11.) When the scribes and the Pharisees brought her to Jesus, he said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." He certainly did not mean sin in general, for of course all men are sinners, and if only saints can execute the law it would never be executed at all. He meant sin of the very type of which they were accusing this woman. There was something about the holiness of Jesus that brought up vivid and vile memories to them, and they slunk away in a kind of terror. They had all either been guilty of the overt act, or they knew that they would have been guilty if they had not been held back by fear and preventing circumstances, like dogs in leash.

When her accusers were all gone "Jesus lifted up himself, and said unto her, Woman, where are they? did no man condemn thee? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way; from henceforth sin no more." Of course, he was not saying, Neither do I blame thee. He meant, Neither do I cut thee off as a hopeless case; go now and be a good woman.

Jesus' special manifestation of sympathy for outcasts was not because he looked lightly on their sins, but because he well knew that those who despised them were often more responsible for their condition than they were themselves.

JESUS SHOCKINGLY SEVERE WITH RESPECTABLE SINNERS

If Jesus shocked people by his spirit of mercy toward harlots, quite as much did he shock them by his severity toward the respectable sinners against social morality.

In the first place he pronounced every man an adulterer who looked upon a woman to lust after her. He means by this, of course, the man who gives the reins to his unclean imagination. This is one of our Lord's great contributions to ethics. He put the whole emphasis on the inner state of mind, knowing that whatever evil a man nursed in his imagination would inevitably come out in his life, possibly not in the overt act, but in some form that would be equally poisonous to society.

In pronouncing a man who nurses vile imaginations an adulterer Jesus utters his stern condemnation upon all who find amusement in reading literature whose chief attraction is in its morbid appeal to the sex instinct. This does not mean a prudish attitude toward all plainness of speech. Some of the plainest novels are almost terribly moral, as for instance, Tolstoi's Resurrection. But Tolstoi's story makes one shudder with horror at impurity, while much of our fiction and our drama suggests that the tree is good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. The countenancing of such literature by high respectables puts them, according to Jesus, in the same class with the scarlet woman

Again, Jesus condemned with unexpected severity the divorce that was so common among the respectables. It was their way of managing to satisfy the unlawful desires which they did not dare to gratify after the fashion of the outbreaking sinner: divorce was adultery in a dress suit. Once a man determined to have another woman he could easily succeed in so exasperating his wife that she would do something to give him a pretext for sending her away. Or if a woman wished to make another alliance she could irritate her husband into divorcing her. That is why Jesus adds, 'Whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery." It was against this hellish kind of business that Jesus hurled his anathemas. In the eyes of God, says Jesus, all scheming to be released from a marriage tie in order to form a more congenial union is on the level of the brothel, or perhaps below it, for the poor unfortunates there may have sinned against far less light, and they may be heartily sick of their sinful lives and wistful for better things. This is why he said to the chief priests and scribes, "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." (Matthew 21. 31.)

But Jesus was opposed to divorce for other reasons than that it was often a mere camouflage for the gratification of illicit desires. As we have already suggested, his sympathy went out to the women who in middle life, with all the charm of girlhood gone, were turned out shelterless upon the world. And Jesus also opposed divorce because the very fact that it was a possibility acted as a "culture" to multiply the germs of discord in the family; whereas, if people regarded it as a settled fact that they must put up with one another for the rest of their lives, they would do just what an oyster does with a grain of sand that has gotten in between its shells. They would put a pearl around it. The most beautifully harmonious homes are not those where the married pair have never found anything irritating in one another, but where through the years they have controlled their tempers and let patience have its perfect work. Finally the union has become not a matter of temperamental congeniality, but a spiritual thing which is lighted up by the very smile of heaven.

And even where no amount of patience can make one of the partners reasonable, if father or mother is kindly and heroic to the last, there are great rewards. Who has not known families where a brave woman endured an exasperating husband with such splendid Christian spirit that the children rose up and called her blessed, and went out to honor her name by helpful service to mankind. Would this have happened if mother had secured a divorce and married again?

"Where do you live?" said a college teacher to a young freshman. "I hardly know," said he; "my father lives in A, my mother left him and is married again and lives in Y; I have a sister in C. I generally go home to father's." What would Mothers' Day mean to that young man? An unbelievable proportion of the young men and women in our reformatories are children of divorced parents. If men will not heed the Word of God written in the Bible, let them heed it written in statistics.

If one wishes to trace the psychological effects of having a mother who has been won away from her true husband to another man, it would be well to muse on Shakespeare's terribly accurate portraiture of a young man whose whole world had been robbed of meaning and romance when the reverence and sweetness had evaporated from the word mother. Hamlet exclaims,

> "How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!
> Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
> That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
> Possess it merely."

Sweet religion to him had become "a rhapsody of words." No wonder God had ceased to be a reality. His only guide from the unseen world was a ghost who might be the spirit of his father, and then again might be the devil. Such young men get into desperate moods where they exclaim, like Hamlet,

> "Now could I drink hot blood,
> And do such bitter business as the day
> Would quake to look on."

SPIRITUAL SURGERY REQUIRED IN THE INTEREST OF THE HOME

Jesus realized that there was need of sternest measures to prevent sin. Between his words about the sinfulness of lustful thoughts and his words about divorce, he says, according to Matthew, "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee."

Some people have supposed that Jesus was recommending monkish asceticism. Far from it. The abnormal life of a monk often breeds temptation, rather than avoids it. Because an appendicitis operation is often necessary to save a life, is no reason why such an operation should be made the rule.

What then does Jesus mean when he tells us, if need be, to pluck out the eye and cut off the hand? He is referring not to sinful acts, but to pursuits and pleasures quite as useful and proper as the eye or the hand. When a man's right hand has become a center of infection and threatens to communicate blood poisoning to the whole body, it must be amputated. In the evil conditions of this world situations arise which demand precisely the same treatment of our legitimate pursuits.

We are grateful that Jesus did not specify any particular kind of pleasure, for then that pleasure would be tabooed and many would imagine it an occasion of sin when for them it might be harmless, or even helpful. Every man is to determine for himself what is dangerous for his peculiar temperament. One finds a certain friendship rich in intellectual stimulus, but dangerously alluring. It must be cut out. Another finds in certain reading a match to kindle unlawful fires. No matter how good the reading, and how well recommended, it must be discarded—although he must be careful not to enforce his conscience upon others. Some people are in danger because they have nothing in their daily program that is exciting. They ought to engage in some adventure so engrossing and difficult that they will dream about it. Often a man's leisure is his time of supreme danger. The remedy for this is more work, and the fact that the work is cruel and hard does not signify. We are talking of surgery here, and surgery means the letting of blood.

THE NEED OF MANY EXPEDIENTS IN FIGHTING TEMPTATION

If often happens that temptation will not yield to one type of treatment alone. During the late war a member of the British High Command was asked whether they had found a means of checking the submarine. He answered, "No, and we are not depending on any one thing, but we believe that if we arm the merchant vessels, and convoy the fleets by destroyers, and constantly bomb the submarine base, and above all, continually use depth bombs, we shall gradually drive the submarines from the sea." And so it turned out. This perfectly illustrates what we must do with fierce temptations. A man must plan ahead in moments when temptation does not beset him the various expedients he will try when the next attack comes, just as a soldier in time of peace constantly drills himself to do what ought to be done in a time of sudden panic and stress. If one expedient does not work, another should be tried, and another, and another. Finally under the combined attack the temptation will slink away.

Social conventions in times of danger must absolutely be ignored. What some people would designate rudeness is often the only course of safety. Jesus said some very impolite words to Simon Peter when he was urging the Lord to turn back from the cross.

A word may be added here about the terrible struggles of boys. They must be taught, when gusts of temptation overwhelm them, to pray; they must learn to visualize Christ on the cross suffering for their sins; they must resort to immediate physical exercise. They must rush into society especially of the opposite sex. They should have within their reach at all times some story with an exciting plot ready to capture their imagination. All of these things together will combine to give them the victory. Paul says, "Put on the *whole* armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

IT IS OFTEN SURGERY OR DEATH

"It is profitable for thee," says Jesus, "that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell." (Matthew 5. 29.) Often the only alternative to a severe pruning of one's life is what the Bible calls hell. This generation is not scared by the word hell, it is rather put in a defiant mood. Some men plunge into excesses when threatened with it, just to show their contempt for what they deem an outgrown medieval doctrine. But the tragic results that spring out of the violation of natural law give the modern mind a pause. And after all it is these results that Jesus has in mind when he speaks of hell. Hell to him is what inevitably happens when a man sins against the laws of his being.

Men scornfully cast aside the thought of sin, but they cannot so easily dispose of the fact of syphilis. And there is a spiritual form of this disease as well as a physical. Men and women who sin against the home may escape the physical disease, but they always contract spiritual syphilis. And spiritual syphilis, like lust for gold, always makes them go blind. "Blessed are the pure in heart," says Jesus, "for they shall see God." That is to say, God will become real to them. And this implies that the opposite is true. The impure in heart do not see God, but in his place see nothing but a brute force, or a mysterious alien power which makes them shudder. Robert Burns who, alas! had had bitter experience in these things, speaking of social vice, says,

> "I'll wave the quantum o' the sin,
> The hazard o' concealin',
> But ach, it hardens a' within
> And petrifies the feelin'.

Men often imagine that the hardship and the sufferings are all on the side of the people who live up to the stern behests of Christ's law of self-sacrifice. But it is not so. "The gods are just and of our pleasant vices make instruments to plague us." A man throws off the yoke of Puritanism; he is tired of his wife and determines to get a divorce and marry his "soul mate." Then he will have a good time.

But the discarded wife comes in like Banquo's ghost and sits at his table, and her pale face haunts him. And when the woman who had encouraged him to discard the wife of his youth reveals herself as the selfish serpent that she is, he gnashes his teeth with vain regrets. The whiff of delicious perfume cannot keep him from scenting the sulphur fumes that come up from the pit. No place is so near hell as the place where men play fast and loose with marriage vows. "Let no man deceive you with vain words," said Paul, "for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." (Ephesians 5. 6.) And this wrath is not a fire lighted from without, but a fire which, like the slaking of lime, comes out of the very nature of things.

IS DIVORCE EVER JUSTIFIABLE?

The question now arises as to whether there are not circumstances in which the very spirit which made Jesus so passionately condemn divorce might even require it. We know that there are circumstances where the love that is back of the injunction, "Give to every one that asketh thee," requires the violation of the literal command, as when a wise mother must refuse many requests of a foolish child. Hence it is conceivable that a literal violation of the command against divorce might be obedience to its spirit.

It goes without the saying that there are circumstances under which a married couple should not live together. But this is not the question. The question is, Are there circumstances where divorce and remarriage would be in harmony with the spirit of Jesus?

We find that Mark and Luke give no exception whatever, but make the command against divorce absolute. It is likely that Mark and Luke represent the original form of Jesus' teaching, and that Matthew, after his custom, interprets Jesus in the light of the practical experience of the church, and mentions fornication as an illustration of those offenses against the marriage relation that annihilate it. It is certainly true that there are other offenses against the marriage bond quite as serious as fornication, as, for instance, when a man comes home and beats his children into insensibility and attempts to murder his wife.

The early church was exceedingly strict in insisting that its leaders should not remarry. (1 Timothy 3. 2.) But it is not in the spirit of the gospel to lay too heavy a burden upon the general conscience, and while usually the innocent party should not remarry there may be circumstances where remarriage would not avert the smile of Christ, and where indeed good ends would be served.

The only point to emphasize is that Christ requires every one who enters into the marriage relation to put forth every possible effort to the very last in order to make the union permanent and successful, and that this effort should not stop short of extreme self-sacrifice.

EUNUCHS

In connection with his teaching concerning divorce Jesus said, "There are eunuchs, that were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, that were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." (Matthew 19. 12.)

Jesus here recognizes the fact that some are cut out of marriage by heredity. Some deformity or other physical lack means that they are not destined for the privileges of the marriage relation. Others are made eunuchs by men. This refers not merely to the victims of physical surgery, but to those who are kept from marriage by one or other of those grim thwartings of youthful desires that are so painfully common. The pathos of the situation is great, and the havoc wrought very grievous. John Hutton says that in his pastoral experience he has found such emotional disasters to be the most common cause of skepticism.

One may be permitted to say, in passing, that a public speaker who tries to be smart by getting off jokes about people who have not been successful in finding mates, ought to be made to feel the resentment of refined people in his audience so sharply that he will never repeat the vulgarity.

And then there is a third class who are called to a type of work in the kingdom of God that can best be fulfilled without the responsibilities of a home. Paul, for instance, was called to go out as a pioneer missionary without a base of supplies. His work lay in communities infested with traveling philosophers who preyed upon the people. Hence he could not take pay from the churches for fear of being identified with these mountebanks. Plainly it was not for the apostle to the Gentiles to "lead about a wife."

For all of these classes—those who by heredity, or by circumstances, or by the divine call, are deprived of the comforts of the home—the gospel has great promises. They can love Christ so intensely, and their fellow men with such overflowing passion, that their lives, instead of being empty and lonely, may be joyously full. They may have a special supernatural reenforcement of human sympathy that will transfigure their spirits and fill them with inexpressible enthusiasm and joy. They can be father or mother or brother or sister, not merely to one family, but to multitudes. Nothing is more real than this glorious filling up of the life of those whom Providence has deprived of the normal relationships of the home.

Homeless people can also have the comfort of knowing that Jesus trod in the same path, and himself proved the truth of his great promises. And it is comforting to know that he did not put the emphasis upon those who went as missionaries and did some dramatically heroic thing, as over against those who just stayed back on the farm and looked after the old folks and the younger children, and did nothing that will ever get into the papers. These, he says, will in the last day have a far brighter crown than some whose deeds have brought them fame: "Many that are first shall be last: and the last first." (Mark 10. 31.)

SUPREME LOYALTY TO CHRIST THE ONLY SOLUTION OF THE DOMESTIC TANGLE

"If any man cometh unto me," says Jesus, "and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, . . . he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14. 26.) It seems strange to us that teaching like this occupies so much space in the gospel. We to-day put much less emphasis than the Gospels do on stern loyalty to Christ as over against the wishes of father and mother, wife and children. But Jesus understood that grave moral danger lurked in the habit of making any person the autocrat of the home. In mission lands the fierce opposition of the family is the chief hindrance of the man who would become a Christian. This terrific pressure of the family and the clan is the thing that makes work among Mohammedans so exceedingly difficult. Jesus said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matthew 10. 34-36.)

Jesus understood that in the long run the best way to bless one's kinsfolk is to be supremely loyal to Christ. Mary was more helpful to Martha after she insisted on sitting at the feet of Jesus and hearing his words. The increased insight into the mind of

Christ gave her more power to sympathize with her sister's imperious ways, and more tact in helping her.

When a man's love for Christ becomes so intense that his love for family seems like hate in comparison, he does not love them less than before. The dominance of Christ means life, and life means the heightening of all the natural affections. When Christ comes in there is more of a man to love with. And it often happens that a youth who displeases his parents by going into the ministry, or becoming a missionary, proves in their old age a far greater comfort to them in every way than the children who were subservient to their will. Jesus said, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold in this time." That is God's promissory note, and he gives a man the privilege of endorsing it over to those who have suffered through his loyalty.

THE FIRE OF RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM CONQUERS THE FIRE OF THE PASSIONS

It is out of our domestic relations that the hottest fires of emotion spring up. The love of father, the love of children, the love of wife or husband, the love of sweetheart, these are the strongest emotions of the human breast. And these lawful flames when not kept under control may easily become destructive. Jesus with his profound insight into human psychology knew that they could only be regulated by a passion that was hotter still. If a man has a religion that is merely cold and abstract principles, he will find after one of these hidden volcanoes of emotion breaks out that he is compelled to exclaim, The things I would not, these I do. The only sure salvation from the unlawful dominance of the hot emotions and jealousies and lusts and despairs, that take the Romeos and Juliets and Othellos and Mark Antonys off their feet, is the fire of a religion which, while it is founded on calm, well-considered principles, is nevertheless very intense and passionate. An unemotional religion is irrational because it ignores the hot blasts with which it will have to contend. Psychology will ere long make us realize that a mere icy intellectuality in our religious life is thoroughly abnormal, and needs the attention of a psychiatrist.

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

In the Berlin Gallery there is a picture of Jesus with a child on his knees. At first sight one is shocked by the unaccustomed severity in the face of Jesus, and then he remembers his saying, "Whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." (Mark 9. 42.) The artist was right. Our Lord was in a fierce mood when he thought of the way people despised little children and stunted their lives by hardness and neglect.

Jesus, on the contrary, had deference for children. He believed that the instinctive attitudes of an unspoiled child were a revelation of God, and that men who had lost their way must constantly go back to them as to a guidepost to learn anew the normal direction that their minds should take.

When the apostles got to quarreling Jesus called a little child to him and made him serve as a theological professor, saying, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18. 3.) If we take the cue from Jesus we shall expect to find many new revelations from the study of the spontaneous impulses and feelings of childhood.

GOD COMES IN WITH THE LITTLE CHILD

When we read the mystics we are often lost in the fog. But Jesus taught a mysticism that was a plain path. "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." (Matthew 18. 5.) "And he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." (Matthew 10. 40.) Those who are puzzled about the way to receive God into their hearts can be kind to little children, and lo, the Spirit of God has entered in.

Jesus regarded the care of children as a work of supreme dignity. He said, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 18. 10.) And by that he did not mean that little children become angels and behold the face of God, but that their guardian angels are such exalted beings that like prime ministers and high officials of state they have constant and free access into the throne room of heaven.

We shall ere long take his viewpoint, and the care and training of children will be regarded as a post of high honor. The Italian art galleries are full of pictures of the enthronement of the Virgin. The coming generations will witness the enthronement of the primary teacher. The day will come when the greatest minds of the age will be centered with enthusiasm that we can now hardly visualize upon the problem of coaxing out of children their infinite possibilities.

Jesus said, speaking of John the Baptist, "He that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Just as to-day the more ordinary animal in a good dairy herd is often better bred than the prize-winners of the agricultural fair of a past generation, so Jesus is looking forward to the day when children will be surrounded with conditions so favorable for development that every ordinary person will attain to a mental stature greater than that of the mighty geniuses who rose out of the hard conditions of the past.

Merciful Father, grant us a due sense of the patience and forbearance of those who dwell with us in our homes. Bless them for their long-suffering toward us, and create within us an answering love that will greatly brighten their lives. Give us the spirit of self-sacrifice. May we take up our cross daily for the members of our households. For their sakes may we give ourselves to much prayer that our lives may breathe an atmosphere of peace and sympathy. May the family altar make every home a sanctuary of God, and the felt presence *of the living Christ fill every household with joy. Bless our children, and give us divine wisdom to call forth all their wondrous possibilities. We bless thee for thine infinite mercy toward us, and may it be our continual delight to show the same mercy toward all who dwell with us. And this we ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

JESUS AND OUR ENEMIES

"The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown.

. . . .

It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.
—*Shakespeare: Merchant of Venice.*

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;
But we will make mention of the name of Jehovah our God.
—*Psalm 20. 7.*

JESUS AND OUR ENEMIES

I. OUR PERSONAL ENEMIES

The Need of Spiritual Politicians

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God." He did not mean merely that men would call them the children of the Most High; he meant that peacemakers would actually be Godlike and hence have power to bring things to pass. He was thinking not only of those who patch up quarrels among neighbors, but also of those divinely inspired leaders who know how to unite factions and by an adroit and kindly diplomacy to persuade men who cannot agree on all things, to unite at least on some measure that is for the common good. Lincoln was an unique illustration of the peacemaker. He could endure snobbish condescension, forget insults, and make his opponents so vividly aware of his appreciation of their honest purposes that he could often persuade them, almost against their wills, to unite with him in some needed measure. Such men are the true creative spirits of humanity, and as such have the right indeed to be called the sons of God.

Peace More Than Pacifism

We need to stress the fact that the peace of which Jesus is talking is not mere absence of fighting. That may be peace in its way, but it is the peace of the tomb. Christian peace is active. It co-operates in good work. It is eager for friendly intercourse. It feels the need of a brother's counsel and wisdom. There is no permanent peace without an intense eagerness for comradeship. Peace, as the Psalmist says, is something we "seek" and "pursue." (Psalm 34. 11-14.)

DISCORD SPRINGS FROM CENSORIOUSNESS

Discord does not first arise on the surface of things. The cause of a quarrel is never its real cause. It always springs out of some previous and hidden attitude of mind. We begin by judging our brother. We take an unfavorable view of his actions before we know all the facts. The greatest peacemaker the writer knows is a scientist who applies his scientific temper to his dealing with men. He is always saying when some one is being condemned in his presence, "But do we know all the facts?" "Judge not," says Jesus, "that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you." If you give men a square deal, in the long run they will give it to you, and there will be peace. But that is not the whole of the truth. None of us wants simple justice from our fellows. We must have mercy. "Blessed are the merciful;" says Jesus, "for they shall obtain mercy." Every one is inwardly constrained to be pitiful toward those who can be counted on to be pitiful toward others.

Anger and contempt Jesus regarded with peculiar horror. To call a brother by a name of spitting contempt, says he, lights the fires of Gehenna. "Whosoever shall say (unto his brother) Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire." Hell will *break out in him by spontaneous combustion.* Nothing is more true to psychology than this statement of Jesus. The man who has contempt for his fellows by the laws of nature always becomes increasingly miserable. Moreover, contempt inspires contempt, and when a man hates and is hated, the fires of his hell are fanned by a twofold draught.

CASES OF INFECTION MUST BE PROMPTLY TREATED

If one has made a slip and wronged his brother, and is forcibly reminded of this fact as he comes into the presence of God in the sanctuary, he is not to sit through the service. He is not even to wait until the collection is taken, for God will not be pleased with a man's offering until he has made things right with his brother. Moreover, the wound he has inflicted may cause blood poisoning to set in at any time in his brother's heart. Let him hurry out of church and make restitution. Afterwards he can come and offer his gift. (Matthew 5. 23.)

When Jesus told the disciples that they should always forgive a repenting brother, Peter asked a very human question: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." Jesus reenforced this command by telling that vivid story about the unmerciful servant whose lord had just forgiven him an incredibly large debt—fifteen million dollars! And he went out and took a brother by the throat who owed him but fifty dollars. That is what you are like, says Jesus, if requiring as you do God's infinite forbearance at every turn, you are not pitiful with a brother when he repents. (Matthew 18. 21-35.)

But suppose some one has wronged us, and shows no disposition to repent, what are we to do then? Many a modern thinks that he is showing himself quite a Christian if he says, I wish him no harm; I will just let him alone. But Jesus is thinking of the irreparable loss a man sustains if a brother is no longer to be reckoned among the men with whom he is on terms of mutual confidence. You must not stop, says he, with the determination to refrain from vengeance. The consequences of estrangement will be too serious for him and for you. Moreover it will be a center of infection in the church. Prurient matter will gather there. Go and have it out with him frankly and kindly; tell him that you want him for a brother and are not content with this estrangement. Beg him to make things right so that you can again live in cordial relations with him.

And if he will not hear you, then bring in some good and kind men whom he also trusts, and offer to submit the matter to arbitration. Perhaps they may see points in which you also are to blame. But if he will not hear them, tell it to the church. This of course does not necessarily mean retailing your quarrel in the public service. It means utilizing to the full all the influence and power that the brethren can bring to bear; in a word, *exhausting your Christian resources to bring the brother back to a right mind.* How strange this sounds in the formal atmosphere of many a modern church. And yet this is the teaching of Jesus. Such was his valuation of brotherly relations. Such was his shuddering sense of the danger of discord among Christians.

If after this the man will not repent, says Jesus, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. (Matthew 18. 15-17.) This, of course, does not mean, Count him as an enemy, but rather, Look upon him as one outside the pale of the Christian brotherhood. And, says Jesus, he *will* be outside the pale, for when a man resists such eager and brotherly solicitude, he cuts himself off from Christ.

Great stress is laid by Jesus on the necessity of acting promptly when a quarrel arises. "Agree with thine adversary quickly," says he, "while thou art with him in the way; lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the last farthing." (Matthew 5. 25, 26.)

Some take this as a warning against taking our disputes to court owing to the great expense involved. But Jesus never said such a flat thing as that. His words always burn with meaning that reaches to the very center of life. He wishes to say that in an angry law suit both sides always lose the case, and leave the court room impoverished. A man who is drawn into a quarrel loses his peace of mind and his sense of God, and wrath burns his energies to a cinder. Nothing consumes the fuel of vitality like anger. Then, too, a law suit brings upon a man the hatred of his opponent, his opponent's family, and all their friends; and the curse of the thing is apt to last for generations.

AGGRESSIVE BENEVOLENCE THE MOST EFFECTIVE REACTION TO OUTRAGE

1. The Form of the Reaction Determined by the Circumstances.

But what is a man to do when he becomes the victim of outrage? Suppose his assailant is not a brother with whom he can reason, but a brutal outsider. Jesus says, "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matthew 5. 39.) Men have made a pretty spectacle of themselves solemnly debating whether this is a rule which ought to be carried out under all circumstances. It is not a rule at all! It is just a wonderfully picturesque saying of the Great Teacher to suggest that our only reaction to any kind of insult should be love. How this love is to be expressed in any given case must be determined on the spot. One has heard of cases where a man struck a bully to the floor, and then had him for a friend forever afterward. The good results proved that the man had carried out the principle of Jesus. *The one thing to be sure about is that whatever a man does in reaction to an insult is an expression of good will.*

Jesus goes on to say, "And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." Tell him that the two match beautifully, and it is a pity to part them and, winter coming on, he will have use for them both. What a strange effect that would have on a selfish, grasping man! How cheap he would feel, carrying away his victim's cloak as well as his coat! And what talk it would make among the spectators in the court room! The name of Christ would be great in the village that night, and if his enemy did not have a heart of stone, he would be softened, and the way opened for a future friendship.

Rather expensive way for a poor man to win back a friend! says some one. Yes, very expensive. The treatments which are efficient for the cure of hate are like radium; they are always very expensive. But what is expense compared with the importance of winning a man from a course that is leading him straight to the pit?

Furthermore, the disease is highly contagious, and these aggressive acts of benevolence are the only way to keep from catching it. To stand still and sullenly endure without catching the disease is psychologically impossible.

Jesus illustrated this same teaching by another example taken from a familiar experience of the Jews. They were constantly meeting detachments of the soldiers of their Roman conquerors, and these soldiers would often force them at the point of the sword to carry their baggage. When the soldier whose pack you have been carrying finally concludes to let you go, smile at him, says Jesus, and say, I have found this load very heavy, and the sun is very hot; I fear it will weary you; please let me carry it for you another mile. What would be the result of such an unexpected reaction? The whole troop would discuss the incident that night around the camp fire, and the innermost essence of the gospel of Jesus would be impressed upon their minds.

2. *Pacifism Must Be Raised to the Point of Audacity.*

It is to be noted here that Jesus is not preaching a tame pacifism. There is nothing passive in giving a man your cloak when you have no money to buy another, or in going with him the second mile when you are too tired to go one. This is pacifism that makes your enemy sure that although you will not fight you are a strong man.

It is related of George Fox, the great Quaker, that once he was arrested by a detachment of Cromwell's soldiers for preaching against war, but he turned on them and preached with such daring courage that they involuntarily exclaimed, "You are the man we want for our officer. Come and join with us." Jesus would have his disciples carry out his policy of non-resistance in a way that would make men instinctively feel that they would make good army officers. The fact that the multitude determined to take him by force and make him their leader in a revolt against Herod, shows that they felt Jesus to be every inch a soldier. (John 6. 15.)

One of the prominent Arabic Christians of Cairo recently said to the writer, "You know that I was born a Mohammedan, and my difficulties are very different from yours. I am not troubled over the question of the relation between science and religion, as your people are. My trouble is with the jibes I hear on every hand that Christianity makes a weak man; and the worst of it is that when I look at the Christians here I fear that there is something in it."

And he was perfectly right. The impression that a large number of the Christians make is one of weakness, but this arises not from their non-resistance but from their half-heartedness and cowardice. The way out is not for them to take the sword in their hand, for then they would soon cease to be Christians at all. The way out is *to raise their pacifism to the point of audacity*, and to love their enemies so intensely that they will feel as though a fire hose has been turned upon them.

IS SUCH BENEVOLENCE POSSIBLE?

But some one asks, How is it psychologically possible to love people for whom we have an instinctive and irresistible repulsion? This question springs partly from a misconception of the meaning of the word love as it is used by Jesus. He thinks of love not as a matter of emotional attraction, but of invincible good will. A man's emotional reactions are often of course beyond his control, but it is possible for him to work and pray for the good of those who are utterly disgusting to him, just as a nurse is kind to a repulsive patient.

In commanding us to love our enemies Jesus assumes that we are in connection with a very high voltage of spiritual power. And this power comes from our relationship with the Most High. We are children of him who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

Jesus had peculiar ability to make the fatherly kindness of God real. Other religions urge to charity and forgiveness; but Jesus enswathed men with that warm atmosphere of the Father's love that makes the forgiving spirit spontaneous and contagious. How did he make men so sure that God was love? It was not by his words alone.

Edward Thurneysen, one of the leaders of the Barthian movement in Switzerland, said to the writer, "You must remember that the Sermon on the Mount was not primarily the exhortations written down in the Gospels; the Sermon on the Mount was Jesus himself." Jesus of Nazareth was a cataract of love. When men listened to him they seemed to be caught in the momentum of a rushing flood of charity for their enemies. And when that love was consummated on the cross, and He rose again a living Presence, then all his disciples in all ages could feel the propelling influence which came to the Galilean peasants who crowded around him on the mount, and heard these words for the first time. It is Christ himself who enables men to perform the impossible feat of loving their enemies.

II. OUR NATIONAL ENEMIES

DOES THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT APPLY TO WAR?

We have been discussing the attitude Jesus would have us take toward our personal enemies. He would not have us seek to extirpate the pugnacious instinct but rather to express it by a daring benevolence that stops at no sacrifice to quench the hate of our enemy. Instead of killing him, we are to destroy his hate. We are to believe with Jesus that love is the mightiest weapon of defense.

The next question that naturally arises is: Would Jesus make a difference between personal retaliation and the retaliation which nations feel impelled to visit on those who insult the flag or invade their rights? What about a "holy war?"

We must make a distinction here between the motives and the methods of war. Whatever may be said of the sinister purpose of the men who inflame the war spirit, a large number of those who enlist do so with the highest motives. They go out to protect their wives and their sweethearts, and their almost incredible heroism as they face the enemy shames us whenever we read of it. The man who opposes war makes a great tactical mistake if he does not go out of his way to recognize the incredible suffering which our soldiers have endured for the honor of their country. And this must not be done coldly as an admission that one is forced to make, but with the utmost warmth and sympathy. But the question is not as to the motives of the soldiers, but as to the wisdom of war as a method of establishing righteousness in the earth.

JESUS' OWN STRUGGLE WITH THE WAR PROBLEM

1. *In the Wilderness.*

Jesus himself was compelled to face this problem from the very beginning. His people were under the iron heel of Rome, and Herod, who by Rome's authority, ruled over Galilee, was a man of the type that was capable of beheading one of the greatest men of all time to please a lewd dancing girl! Taxes were galling, and the people were seething with the spirit of revolt. They could not imagine a Messiah who would not lead them in a victorious uprising against the Romans. And as Jesus felt called of God to fulfill the Messianic hope, the problem of using military force to achieve his end was very acute.

During his temptation in the wilderness Jesus realized with intense vividness that by the use of force he might put himself on the throne of power, and thus restore to the world just and good government. And yet at the same time he saw that this would mean the destruction of unnumbered thousands of men who were not responsible for the bad government, and it would mean also that his road to power would be blackened by desolated homes, burned cities, and homeless women and children. It would mean that the name of Jesus in millions of ears would inspire terror because a father or a husband had been slain by his soldiers. Jesus knew also that by war disciples like Peter and John, instead of being transformed into saints, would become hardened slayers of men, and wholly unfit to write the glowing pages of such a book as the New Testament.

And so Jesus said to the suggestion of becoming a military leader, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" He chose rather the path that made the rulers despise him, but led at last to that influence and power that has made men sing around the world,

> "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
> In a believer's ear!
> It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
> And drives away his fears."

2. *After the Feeding of the Five Thousand.*

The question of war confronted Jesus again when after the feeeding of the five thousand the excited multitude came to take him by force and make him king. But Jesus forced his disciples violently into the boat to get them out of the dangerous atmosphere, and shaking off the crowd he fled to the mountain for prayer.

The next day in the synagogue at Capernaum he told the people that it was indeed true that blood must be shed to deliver them, but it was not the blood of their Roman conquerers but his own, that must be spilled. "Except," said he, "ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have not life in your selves."

3. *On the Night of the Arrest.*

On the night before his crucifixion when the soldiers and mob came to take Jesus, Simon Peter with indomitable courage attacked them, although he knew that there was but one other sword in the company. If there was ever a case of military heroism, it was that, and if war was ever justified, it was then. Here was the best man that ever lived about to be seized by murderous foes. The preservation of his life was more important for humanity than that of the life of any person that ever lived. And Peter, without a thought of self, "went over the top." But Jesus said, "Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matthew 26. 52-54.)

Thus Jesus absolutely forswore war as a means of bringing in his kingdom. He knew that even angels using physical force could not build up a kingdom that physical force could not destroy.

SELLING YOUR GARMENT TO BUY A SWORD

One saying of Jesus seems to contradict what we have just been saying. The last night of his life Jesus warned the disciples that terrible danger was upon him, and said, "He that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword." It was a vivid saying, because they were all shivering with cold. It seems that Peter and one of his fellow disciples had all along been carrying weapons, but they had kept them concealed probably because of an instinctive feeling that Jesus might not approve of it. But when to their surprise Jesus now urges them to buy a sword, Peter said, "Lord, behold, here are two swords." Jesus waved them aside with the saying, "It is enough." Of course it would not have been enough if Jesus had expected them to do battle. He probably meant, Enough of that now; you will understand me hereafter.

What then could he have meant when he said, He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one? The fact that he forbade Peter to use his sword shows that Jesus certainly did not mean a literal sword. He meant rather an attitude of mind that is prepared for the worst. He meant readiness to use all of the resources of manhood and courage to parry the malevolent and powerful forces of evil. He meant that shrewdness and audacity, and that quick resourcefulness which great spiritual leaders manifest in the presence of danger to them and to their flocks. Many a missionary has used this flashing sword in the presence of the heathen when savage mobs came to destroy him. One needs only to read the life of John G. Paton, of the New Hebrides, or of Livingstone, of Africa, to know the meaning of our Lord's words. These men drew no blood, but their wills were iron, and their wits flashed like a Damascus blade.

THE USE OF FORCE NECESSARY

But some one says, This is all very well for those whose aim is to set up a kingdom that is not of this world, but God has placed us in an environment that also requires a government of this world, and hence force is necessary. We are not arguing that Jesus would always have disapproved the use of force. Indeed he used mild force himself on one occasion when he made a whip of small cords, drove out the sheep and the cattle from the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers. Of course there is no proof that he used the whip on the men, but to make this point seems to us caviling. Jesus did not merely exhort these men to be gone; he terrified them into flight, and terror is force. But we notice here that Jesus was not whipping their wives and children, as war does, and that he was doing something that not only public opinion but even the objects of his wrath knew to be justified. He conveyed a personal blessing upon every rascal of them by driving them out.

Civil government certainly requires force to accomplish its ends. To take the position that force under all circumstances is wrong, leads to philosophical anarchy. It would deny the right of society to send a policeman to take in hand a drunken man who was running amuck. It would even deny the right of a mother to coerce a silly child about to run into his own destruction.

THE PRACTICAL QUESTION: CAN WE DEFEND THE HORRORS OF MODERN WAR?

But the question we have to face now is not whether force is ever justifiable. It is the question as to whether modern warfare with all its unspeakable horrors is an institution to which the Christian can lend himself. Can he sanction ærial attacks of bombs, and poison gas that will wipe out a great city in a few hours? Can he sanction a food blockade that will starve babies? Can he justify the organized propaganda of lies concerning the enemies' atrocities that every government in the late war deemed it necessary to carry on, in order to keep the people up to the required pitch of hate? Can he endorse an institution that will mean ineffaceable mental wounds on all its soldiers, whatever happens to their bodies?

One of the high officers of the Salvation Army in London recently said that the work of the Army used to be with old men corrupted and ruined by drink; now it is mostly with young men morally wrecked by the war. But suppose a man escapes the temptation of lust and drink—as many of them did, thank God!—there is yet another kind of wound that the best of them did not escape. When our noble and heroic youth went into battle taking their lives into their hands for their country, and in the course of that battle pushed their bayonets through the body of a German lad, and saw him die at their hands, they themselves were cruelly injured. To kill a man who probably entered the war with the same high patriotic motives as oneself, entails a permanent wound upon the killer, and this no matter how high his motives. This is the general testimony of the soldiers. It was a hard thing to write to mother the night after they had killed their man. It did not seem natural. What should they say? Dear Mother—but how should they use the sweet, old words of affection when they knew that they had for ever desolated the heart of another mother who loved her son as tenderly as their own. The bands may play, and the banners may swing, and the tramp of a splendid regiment may make every nerve in the body tingle with an irresistible enthusiasm; but it is camouflage. War is the most hideous and beastly thing the world has ever known. It may be undertaken to cast out the devil, but, as Leyton Richards says, "it is casting out the devil by Beelzebub, the prince of devils," and the man who escapes its degenerating influence does it by a miracle.

WAR NOT INEVITABLE

The first message of the spirit of Jesus concerning war is that it is not one of those inevitable phenomena that arise out of the nature of things. A pagan-minded college professor said some time ago, as he looked back over the processes of evolution, "The man who is working for world peace is striving against the cosmic forces! Beasts and men have always fought, and they always will." Reasoning of this sort would say that the man who is working for the purity of the family is also striving against the cosmic forces, because promiscuous sexual relations have been the rule in the animal world. Indeed, if a man believes that we have progressed as far as the theory of evolution asserts, how can he logically refuse to believe in the possibility of great progress in the future? Jesus believed in the infinite possibilities of man. He came to found the kingdom of heaven—"that ideal social order in which all men in their attitude to God are as children, and to one another as brethren." He has back of him a great line of prophets who pictured the nations beating their swords into plough shares and their spears into pruning hooks. He came as the fulfillment of the prophecy that called him the Prince of peace, and proclaimed that of the increase of his government and of peace there should be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. Back of this, said Jesus, is the enthusiasm of God. (Isaiah 9. 6, 7.)

There is ground for calling in question the shallow optimism that expects to bring in peace by treaties and world courts, without also renewing the hearts of men. But he that doubts its ultimate attainment calls in question the existence of a good God.

It must be added that the view of the Scriptures which discourages as hopeless and futile all attempts to organize for world peace until the cataclysm when the Lord comes and finally destroys the forces of evil, while it may have some passages to quote in its favor, is compelled to ignore a veritable Gulf Stream of other Scriptures; and it turns our Lord's command to make disciples of all nations into bitter mockery. On the other hand, it does stress this important truth, that it is not likely that the patient teaching of the prophets of peace will come to its full fruitage until the judgments of God bring the nations into a condition where they suddenly realize that it is world peace or the destruction of civilization.

HOW SHALL WE SPRAY THE WORLD AGAINST THE PEST OF WAR?

1. *Quenching of National Spirit Not Necessary.*

And now as to practical measures, let us first tread on ground where we are all agreed. It would be admitted by every one that vastly more ought to be done than we are now doing to *prevent occasions of national friction from arising.* We all admit that our own nation and our neighbors ought to be regularly sprayed against the pest of war, as we spray our orchards against pests. How can we do this?

Many would say, Fight nationalism. The flag is the Moloch that requires the bloody sacrifices of our sons. Especially fight imperialistic nationalism. But strange to say, Jesus was the most intense nationalist that ever lived. He stopped at no sacrifice to inspire Israel with a sense of its exalted mission. In spite of his ill treatment at the hands of his people, he stayed with them faithfully to the end, and resolutely concentrated his energies upon their welfare. And he commanded his disciples to do the same. It was only after the Jews had rejected and crucified their Master that they departed from Palestine.

2. *A New Type of Imperialism Demanded.*

But Jesus was not only a nationalist; he was an imperialist. He believed that God had called Israel to be the light of the world, and the spiritual head of humanity. Jesus would say that it is vain and foolish to seek to quench that God-inspired ambition which springs up in the breast even of the smallest nation to become a world power. The point is to teach it a right method.

Jesus' way of making his own nation great, and of extending its power throughout the world, was exactly the opposite to that proposed by the modern imperialist. Instead of fanning national pride, he constantly rebuked the fanatical arrogance of the Jews. He did not for a moment believe that there was something in Jewish blood that constituted them essentially superior to other nations.

In his speech in the synagogue at Nazareth he reminded them that there were many widows in Israel in the time of the prophet Elijah, but the only widow that was judged worthy to entertain the greatest man of her time was a woman that belonged to the abhorred Sidonian nation from which the wicked Jezebel had come; and there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, but none of them was healed save Naaman who was not a Jew at all, but a representative of the race that at that time the Jews hated above all others. "Many," says Jesus, "shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness." This was not lack of patriotism. It was patriotism in its highest form, for Jesus knew that the only hope of the nation was salvation from its arrogance.

The one sovereign remedy against false imperialism is the imperialism of Jesus. If the people could only come to have it as their supreme desire to influence the whole world for good, they would take one of the greatest possible steps toward the prevention of war. Germany's pre-war zeal to spread its highly developed scientific "Kultur" was quite legitimate; the only trouble was the Kaiser's determination to force it upon the world by the sword, and his attitude of pride which repeated the slogan, "Deutschland uber Alles," whereas he should have said, "Deutschland unter Alles," helping like Atlas to hear the burdens of the world.

3. *Every Nation Should Go to School to Its Neighbors.*

Now in connection with this desire to have a profound influence upon the world, and enter into leadership among the nations, Jesus would say that every nation should go to school to its neighbors.

He continually illustrated this attitude of learning from foreigners. He glorified the Gentile centurion as an example of faith. "I have not found so great faith," said he, "no, not in Israel." He even insisted that Israel should learn from the Samaritans whom they despised above all other peoples. So tense were the relations between the two nations that, had the restraining hand of Rome been removed, war would have broken out on the slightest pretext. We can see this in the desire of James and John that the Lord would let them call down fire from heaven and consume the Samaritan village that had just turned them away. And yet Jesus resolutely set himself to teach the Jews to appreciate the good qualities of their Samaritan neighbors.

As his ideal neighbor he picked out a Samaritan as over against the Jewish priest and Levite who passed by on the other side when they saw the poor fellow who had fallen among thieves. He called attention to the fact that the healed Samaritan leper was the only one of the ten that had gratitude enough to give thanks. What splendid evangelistic material these stories were for Philip when he went down to preach the gospel in Samaria. The Saviour whom I proclaim, he could say, held you up before the Jews as examples of kindliness and gratitude!

Few things make peace with a nation more effectively than a sincere willingness to learn from it. Think how it would delight some small and backward country, painfully conscious that the nations of the world looked down on it, to have a delegation from one of the great nations come to study some aspect of their educational program, or their civic life. And it seems superfluous to add that learning from humbler nations would not merely flatter them, and thus be a preventive of future friction, but would also be immensely to the advantage of the more powerful nation. There is no nation in the world so undeveloped that we might not learn from it some very useful lessons. As one goes round the earth he finds in every country some way of doing things better than he has ever seen before; niceties of manner, ingenious devices, admirable customs, forms of beauty—a constant succession, indeed, of things worth noting and reproducing at home.

Our manufacturers are dependent upon the products of the most primitive peoples. We must go for our quinine to the wild forests of the Amazon, and for our automobile tires to the African coasts or the Malay Peninsula. What we need now to learn is that the same is true in the intellectual and spiritual realm. Some idea or custom of a backward race may be just the thing we need to give our more sophisticated notions the finishing touch.

Our agricultural department is ransacking the whole earth for plants that have qualities that can resist the pests that destroy similar plants in our country. Would it be surprising if certain customs and institutions learned from the most primitive tribes might, in combination with qualities that we have developed, render us immune to some of the pests that are eating into our civilization? The great civilizations in the past have often been destroyed by the inroads of more vigorous barbarian tribes. Why in the future may civilization not be preserved by learning from these barbarians?

But of course our chief benefits are to come from the more developed and advanced nations whose civilization is of a distinctly different type. We bring our tea from far off Japan and China, and there are ideas of these great peoples which if imported into our life would stimulate us far more than their tea. And when we learn the habit of eagerly watching the lives of all our neighboring nations for the raw material out of which to organize a higher and finer national life, we shall not be disposed to fight with them, or they with us.

4. *A Greedy Commercial Imperialism the Chief Menace.*

The two types of imperialism which are most provocative of war are the militaristic and the commercial. The huge corporate greed that brings pressure upon the government to send its gunboats in order that it might monopolize some needed product of a weaker nation, and at the same time demands tariff walls that shut the world out of competition with its home markets, is to-day without a doubt the chief cause of war. Indeed it is war. A distinguished Oxford professor has recently said that cut-throat competition is a continuous war, and that a military outbreak is simply like the cough of an influenza patient, a mere symptom of a continuous state. *Hence the attack on war cannot be successful without a simultaneous attack on unscrupulous greed.*

5. *Getting the Habit of Acting as a World Family.*

In this connection it should be added that our problem of the tariff points us to the necessity of world agreements concerning hours of labor and working conditions, for it is the difference in the labor conditions that drives a nation whose workers are well paid to erect tariff walls to protect them from the competition of underpaid workers. And this fact brings us inevitably to the necessity of some regularly constituted world parliament.

The nations cannot keep the peace permanently without getting into the habit of solving their problems as a great world family. They must develop along the lines now being so successfully exemplified in the International Labor Office at Geneva, and in the joint work for the prevention of diseases and the suppression of the white slave traffic. By these co-operative efforts there is gradually being built up a habit of working together for the common good. The habit of looking upon the troubles of any nation as a matter of concern for all people, will in time enable us so to organize, and bring to bear the public opinion of mankind upon the attempt of any people to browbeat or oppress a neighboring nation, so that for shame they will desist from their evil designs. The wars that have been recently extinguished as they began to smoulder by the League of Nations show the enormous power of world opinion when this opinion is concentrated like a stream from a hose upon the kindling flames of national hatred.

Back of these international organizations there must be the Christian church and the Christian press prepared to mobilize public opinion both upon the government, and the masses of the people, whenever the yellow press seeks to arouse the angry passions of the nations. The church should be so organized that it could act with great promptness at a crisis. Just as the firemen roused by a night alarm, slide down the brass pole, not waiting to descend the stairways, and are on their engines in a moment, so the church should be ready for instant action whenever the fires of hate against another nation flame up. And to this end every denomination must be prepared for unified efforts with all other churches. Lack of united action in these matters is a crime.

And it must not be by protest and petition merely that the church acts, but by the immeasurably more powerful weapon of prayer. Prayer is the long range artillery that is to be the substitute for the belching demons that send the shells into the enemy's camp. It is the true air attack. In the long run nothing can resist it. This prayer must be continuous, and not merely at the crisis. Indeed, we cannot rightly say the Lord's Prayer without praying for world peace, for he bade us say, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." And when Christ put that prayer into our mouths he knew it would be answered.

6. *Educating the World for Peace.*

Hand in hand with prayer we must rely on education. The head master of Harrow, the great English public school, recently said that "world peace is first and last a matter of education." Our history books should be sterilized from all militaristic tendencies. The tinsel should be stripped off, and war should always be described in a way that brings out its insanity. The Broadway Tabernacle was on the right track when it taught its children to say, "War is a method of settling disputes by killing off the best boys." When the children learn of Washington, they should not merely hear about the battles of the Revolution, but they should learn to repeat his great saying at its close when he said concerning war, "My chief wish is that this curse of mankind should be banished from the earth.'

Education should be reorganized around the idea of the unity of mankind, and children by every device should be taught to see truth with the world as a background. And they should be thrilled with the thought of making their nation so great that all the nations will love it, and learn from it generosity and courtesy toward the weakest peoples.

PEACE TO BE CONSUMMATED BY A MARTYR NATION

When this patient work beginning with little children in their earliest years, and continuing through our whole educational system, has been carried on through the generations, the day will come when we shall be willing to spend as much in productive work to bring about peace as now we spend upon war.

Suppose we had the price of the construction and upkeep of a few battleships to be used in the elaborate training of a large number of consular officers in the art of sowing the seed of mutual good understanding between ourselves and other nations. Suppose we had the price of other battleships to bring thousands of foreign students to our universities, and to send thousands of our own students to the universities of our neighbor nations, so that at any crisis between us and another nation there would be in both countries a great body of informed leaders whose national prejudices had been worn off by contact with other peoples. The imagination is staggered by the thought of what might be accomplished for world unity if we only devoted to the propaganda of peace the men and the treasure that we now devote to preparation for war.

A nation that would protect itself must spare no expense or effort in the development of great leadership. When the stalwart Elijah ascended in the chariot of fire, the story tells us that Elisha, his young disciple, exclaimed, "The chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" In a flash of insight he had realized that in the going up of this great, wise and commanding personality the standing army of Israel was departing. Elijah had been the defense of the realm. And so it always is. The chief defense of a nation is its great men. One Lincoln is better than many battleships.

When by concentration on this aim our nation is really filled with inspired leadership, there will be developed such a public sentiment that the country will be willing to go the second mile, and be a martyr to the principles of peace, as Belgium was a martyr to national defense. If a nation were to carry out Christ's principles of non-resistance, there is no assurance that it would not be overrun by foes, but there is an absolute assurance that it would rise again from the dead on the third day. Quickly such a people would transform their conquerors and reign over them in power: and not only over them, but over the nations of the earth.

One Man tried the experiment of dying on the cross for the sake of peace, and God raised him on the third day to reign in glory. What marvels will be revealed when not only one man, but a great nation tries the same experiment! Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the glory that would come to that people.

Gracious God, thy property is always to have mercy. Seventy times thou dost forgive us. How little we know of the pain our unbelief inflicts upon thee. Yet when we repent thou dost have mercy upon us, and love us freely. Good God, give us grace likewise to be pitiful toward all those who in any wise harm or injure us. Baptize us with power to answer all insults with love. Give us the tact and tenderness of true peacemakers. And what we ask for ourselves we ask for our country, and for all the nations of the earth. Hasten the day when war shall be no more, and mankind shall be one great family of God. And this we ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

JESUS AND SELF-SACRIFICE

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.—*Isaiah 53. 5.*

"HE WAS A GAMBLER, TOO, . . ."

And, sitting down, they watched him there,
  The soldiers did;
There, while they played with dice,
He made his sacrifice,
  And died upon the cross to rid
God's world of sin.
He was a gambler, too, my Christ,
He took his life and threw
It for a world redeemed.
  And ere his agony was done,
Before the westering sun went down,
Crowning the day with its crimson crown,
  He knew that he had won.

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JESUS AND SELF-SACRIFICE

Jesus No Ascetic

In studying the sacrificial aspect of our Lord's life, and its meaning, it is necessary to begin by noting that he was in no sense an ascetic. According to John's Gospel, he took his disciples to a wedding at the very beginning of his career, and turned the water into wine. Whatever we may think of the historical character of this narrative, it is the best of evidence as to the impression Jesus made upon the early church.

We read also that Jesus shocked the disciples of John the Baptist by his failure to enforce fasting upon his disciples. His enemies called him "a gluttonous man, and a winebibber." (Luke 7. 34.) This of course was a lie, but it shows plainly that Jesus did not make a virtue of refusing the good things of life when they were offered to him. Men who are hard on their bodies just for the sake of being hard, would have annoyed him. When his disciples were criticised for not fasting, he defended them by saying, "Can ye make the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?" (Luke 5. 34.) There was something festive about his ministry that put men in the mood of wedding guests.

But under the festive garment there was the hairy mantle of stern self-denial. And it is important in these days when we are so afraid of Puritanism and the narrow gate, to take a good long look at this side of the picture.

THE MENTAL AND MORAL SQUALOR OF NAZARETH

It was in Nazareth before he began his public ministry that Jesus endured much of the suffering of his life. To-day Nazareth is one of the best towns in Palestine, but we must rememeber how much Christian effort has been lavished on it during the centuries. When Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets,wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," Nathanael exclaimed, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John I. 45, 46.) This certainly was more than the jealousy of a neighboring village, for Jesus said of Nathanael, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" If we needed any added proof of the degeneracy of Nazareth, we find it in the fact that when Jesus came back to the town and preached an inspired and beautiful sermon, they rose up in wrath and sought to lynch him. Picture the mental squalor of a little town that would do that!

It was in this atmosphere that Jesus was constrained to spend the first thirty years of his life. With his genius he could easily have escaped this environment, as thousands of other bright lads have done, leaving the village in which they were born and going off to the big city with its superior advantages. But home duties for some reason held Jesus fast. He may also have reasoned that as most of the human race chained by marriage ties and economic necessity, must spend their lives in some suffocating little village, it behooved him first to prove the victorious power of his evangel amid such deadening conditions before he set out to preach it.

But Jesus must do more than live a life of faith and meekness at Nazareth. He must obtain there the preparation that would fit him for the supremest task of history. But, some one says, I thought Jesus got his message by divine inspiration. How can we speak of study and preparation as a necessity for Christ, as though he were just an ordinary preacher? We reply that any view of Jesus that remotely suggests that his profound insight into the problems of life were not the result of hard and grueling thought, is a serious heresy. For just in proportion as Jesus is lifted above hard human necessities, does he become less of a Saviour for those who must endure them. We therefore believe that Jesus was the hardest student that ever lived.

We do not mean by this that Jesus always had a book before him. Indeed he was too poor even to own a scroll of the Scriptures, much less of other books. He was called to an intellectual life far more difficult than the conning of books. He must clear new pathways in the fields of thought. He must climb mountains where no other feet had trod.

How did he do it with the working hours in Palestine from sunrise to sunset? It is a mystery. But that he did do it is an unspeakable encouragement to every wistful mind deprived of the advantages of the schools.

THE STRUGGLE IN THE WILDERNESS

After Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan his overwhelming sense of a great mission drove him into the wilderness for another long season of wrestling with the problems that confronted him.

Jesus chose the wilderness of Judea for his retirement because it was the nearest place of solitude that he could reach. It is a piled-up confusion of dark, grim rocks, the very sight of which makes one shudder. He risked starvation and the wild beasts by going into it; but at the moment no risks seemed to him so great as the risk of allowing the wonderful new inspiration that had come to him to evaporate as he knew it would if he failed at once to think his way through to all its consequences.

In the wilderness Jesus remained in terrific concentration of thought and prayer for a very long time. The Evangelists after the oriental manner call it forty days and forty nights. It was the most intense strain of continuous thinking ever endured by mortal.

The Evangelists tell us that he was tempted of the devil. Any one who under the influence of the Spirit attempts really to think and really to pray until he reaches confident conclusions concerning the central problems of life, will find out what this means. The devil of sloth, and the devil of convention, and the devil of fear, will beset him on every side. He will have a sense of being opposed by subtle spiritual enemies that the mass of men know nothing about, for the powers of evil viciously resent the attempt of any man to get out of the groove of worldly conventions and to face the facts of life under the light of God.

The severity of this experience was greater be-because, as he reached his conclusions one after another, they all pointed to a career that would disappoint the popular expectation. He first settled it that he must not in any wise use his genius to lift himself out of the hard conditions that needy humanity must face. He must rather by his example teach his fellows that man shall not live by bread alone, but by all those hidden sources of refreshment that God provides for rich and poor alike. Then he decided that he must not attempt to dazzle the people by any brilliant spectacle, but must wait for the slow discovery of his greatness by men who could detect behind the carpenter's blouse the Saviour of the world. And finally he decided that he must not, for the sake of immediate success, use either force or cunning, but must go out to conquer the brute force of the world depending only on the Spirit of God.

THE PHYSICAL HARDSHIPS OF THE PUBLIC MINISTRY

The conclusions to which Jesus came in the wilderness launched him into a career in which, for the rest of his life, he was to be a wandering and homeless rabbi. Scarcely anything is said in the Gospels about the physical hardships of Jesus' public ministry. But they could not have been slight. In winter, like the people of Palestine to-day, he doubtless suffered a great deal from cold. When Jesus said to his disciples concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, "Pray that your flight be not in winter," he was speaking out of personal experience. He had just recently come from a winter journey to Cæsarea Philippi, and that country, swept as it is by the winds from the snow-capped Lebanons, is a freezing place. It is not that the winters of Palestine are, comparatively speaking, so cold, but that the country is devoid of fuel (Matthew 6. 30), its houses are without means of protection from the cold, and its people are ill clad. (Exodus 22. 27; Luke 3. 11.

And then in summer that part of Palestine which Jesus felt constrained to choose for his main ministry, is paralyzingly hot. It is below the sea level, and steams like a vapor bath.

Moreover, to be compelled after a grueling day of preaching to sleep on the floor of some crowded, vermin-infested house, was no light affliction. When Jesus said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8. 20), he was voicing the weariness and pain of being a homeless wanderer.

Food also was insufficient. The fact that the multitudes would follow him for miles in hopes of getting another meal of victuals, shows that Palestine was a hungry land. And he of course must share in the deprivations of the people. We cannot think of his allowing the poor to give him the choicest morsel while their hungry children looked on wistfully. It must have touched him deeply when the Pharisees complained of his disciples as Sabbath-breakers simply because, as no one had offered them food, they were trying to stop the gnawings of hunger by the grains of wheat which they were rubbing out in their hands. Doubtless he too was hungry.

Jesus also must train a group of apostles, and hence must persuade them to leave their respectable homes and join in his adventure. Their presence added to his own physical hardships, for special comforts to which he might be invited would not be available for all, and he would often be constrained to refuse what his disciples could not share.

We find no evidence up to the time of the triumphal entry that Jesus eased his journeys up and down the steep ascents by using one of the faithful donkeys which are such a blessing to the peasants of Palestine to-day. How, forsooth, could they find provender in the little villages where they lodged for thirteen donkeys? And he could not ride while his friends walked. Hence Jesus trudged along on foot. And when for the sad pageantry of his final entry an ass was needful, they borrowed one for an hour with the promise quickly to return it.

Jesus also had to share with the disciples their constant anxiety about the families which they had left at home. The record says, They tell him of Peter's wife's mother, how she was sick of the fever. This was but one of the endless family worries they loaded upon him.

BEARING THE BURDENS OF THE POOR AND SICK

Then, too, Jesus suffered because of his sympathy with the poor. His words, "The poor ye have always with you" (John 12. 8), have an unforgettable meaning in Palestine. Gaunt misery stalks on every hand, and Jesus never passed by on the other side either physically or intellectually. The cold bloodedness of the rich toward the needy cut him like a knife. (Matthew 25. 45.) We know he was in the habit of sharing the slender funds in the bag with them, for the apostles, when Jesus said to Judas, "What thou doest, do quickly" (John 13. 27), inferred from past experience that he meant that he should give something to the poor.

Jesus' sympathy for the sickness and insanity that were everywhere in evidence, moved him to minister to them. This, if it had been no more than an attempt to give sympathy and cheer, would have been exhausting, as every nurse can testify. But he did more than this. He felt challenged of God to heal them, and when he did so virtue went out of him. (Luke 8. 46.)

The fame of his healing brought added hardships, for the multitude thronged him and would not give him leisure so much as to eat. Once he sought to get away for a little rest, but when he landed on the other shore where he expected the seclusion of nature, lo, a multitude awaited him, for they had seen the direction of the ship and had hastened around the head of the lake. But Jesus, instead of showing impatience, had compassion on them, and taught them many things; and both he and the multitude forgot food until the day began to wear away. (Mark 6. 30-44.)

The feeding of this multitude brought on a crisis of excitement. They were determined to make him a king. (John 6. 15.) This proposal Jesus must firmly refuse, but he could not give himself to sleep that night until the pain that came from so bitterly disappointing the people was eased, his vision cleared, and his faith strengthened to endure the coming reaction against him. So he climbed the mountain for a night of prayer. We can see him stumbling in the dark over the rocks as he goes up.

This constantly recurring necessity of stealing from his sleep in order to get opportunity for communion with God, must have been a severe hardship. Most of us know nothing about the strain of living where there is no door that we have a right to shut against intruders, and where we can get no chance for quiet save when our bodies are clamoring for sleep.

THE CHILDISHNESS AND UNBELIEF OF THE DISCIPLES

In addition to this type of physical and nervous strain, there was the wear and tear that came from the childishness of the disciples. "Are ye also even yet without understanding?" he exclaimed one day when they asked the meaning of a parable which ought to have been obvious to them. (Matthew 15. 16.) They grieved him also by quarreling among themselves. They tried him by their officiousness as when they took it upon themselves to drive away the mothers who were bringing their babes to him, or as when at another time James and John forbade the man who was casting out devils in the name of Jesus, because he followed not with them.

His command, "Go not from house to house" (Luke 10. 7), suggests that they had given him good cause to feel that they needed warning against hurting the feelings of the kindly poor who received them, by going to another house in hope of better food. In other words, they had not always shown themselves to be fine gentlemen. This would embarrass Jesus greatly.

The disciples deeply grieved Jesus also by their lack of faith. When he came down from the mountain and found that they had been going through some sort of futile incantation in hope of curing a sick child, he exclaimed, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I bear with you?" (Matthew 17. 17.) It was agony to Jesus to see the disciples through carelessness or cowardice fail to take hold of the great powers and possibilities which he was daily putting within their grasp. A government engineer in a certain oriental country recently told the writer about constructing an excellent sewerage and water system for an unhealthful city, and then, alas, seeing prejudice keep many of even the more intelligent from connecting with the sewer or using the pure water which he brought from the hills. This engineer's experience was a faint image of what Jesus constantly endured. A father and mother with a son who does not care for the education they are eager to give him, can understand this aspect of Jesus' sufferings.

But the disciples, of course, were a supreme joy as compared with many others. The man who interrupted Jesus while he was teaching and asked him to go home with him and make his brother divide the inheritance, is only a sample of the brazen demands which selfish men continually made upon him. (Luke 12. 13.)

THE HATRED OF RULERS

But, of course, the bitterest suffering that Jesus had to bear was the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees. To have the men who were looked up to as the examples of piety in the nation, continually eyeing him with their censorious leer, was acute pain. Yet Jesus kept on in kindly attempts to make them see the truth. Doubtless his acceptance of their occasional patronizing invitations to dinner meant far greater self-denial than his meals in the dirty hovels of the poor. But he was not merely the poor man's Christ, he was the Son of man, and so he must go and do what he could for them.

When Jesus felt impelled to heal the sick, even though it were on the Sabbath Day, the censoriousness of the Pharisees flamed into fierce persecution, and finally became a national conspiracy to put him to death.

To go up to Jerusalem at the next Passover after this conspiracy was formed, meant putting himself at the mercy of his enemies. One alternative that presented itself was to leave Palestine, and go among the Greeks beyond the Jordan. It is possible that Andrew and Peter had this in mind when they consulted together before they went to Jesus to tell him of the request of the Greeks to see him. (John 12. 20-24.) John tells us that the multitude also said one to another, "Will he go unto the Dispersion among the Greeks?" (John 7. 35.) But Jesus sternly rejected the pleasing suggestion. Said he, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." (John 12. 24.) He decided that the example of being faithful to his one local task to the bitter end, was a better way to evangelize the Gentile world than to go and preach to them directly.

Moreover, Jesus had many friends throughout Palestine who would come up expecting to see him, and he must not disappoint them. Then, too, he could not set his apostles an example of the least shrinking from danger. They would meet stern tasks after his departure, and would need the memory of one who was faithful unto death. Hence he set his face like flint to go up to the feast. There was about him a tragic solemnity as they slowly went on their way up the mountain roads toward the city of the great king. The apostles fell back in awe, and he walked on ahead. The record says, "They were amazed; and they that followed were afraid." (Mark 10. 32.)

THE FINAL TRAGEDY

The deliberate entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in the procession of his shouting disciples, involving as it did, a definite declaration of his Messiahship, brought matters to a crisis; and when he went into the temple and drove out the money changers he signed his own death warrant.

During the last week Jesus used to the utmost every ounce of energy in teaching the people, going early in the morning to meet the crowds that waited for him, and remaining with them all day.

When the last night approached, although Jesus knew that his hour was at hand, he spent the whole evening giving tender counsels of comfort to his disciples. This utter self-forgetfulness involved great will power, and after it was over a reaction came upon him and he nearly collapsed in the dark as he wrestled with the Father, begging if possible that this cup might pass from him. But loyalty triumphed, and he arose with calmness to meet the soldiers that came to arrest him, and faced the Sanhedrin with the daring declaration, "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26. 64.) When brought before Pilate he looked silently into his face and terrified him by a calm refusal to answer his questions.

As they crucified him, Jesus kept saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Before the end came, he spoke words of comfort to the thief, and consigned his mother to the care of the beloved disciple.

Darkness settled down upon him, thick and terrible, and he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus Jesus died. His life of utter self-denial seemed to be an utter failure. And so it continued to seem for two days. And then on the third day an event occurred that changed the whole course of history; and the death of Christ was no longer the pitiful failure of an idealist, but the deepest solution of the tragedy of the world's sorrow and sin.

THE MEANING OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

As we must never consider the death of Christ apart from his life, so also we must never consider his death apart from his resurrection. Jesus always looked at them both together, and called them his glorification. Without his death of loving sacrifice his resurrection would be no great evangel; and without his resurrection his death would leave us in despair.

The death of Jesus meant that he himself stood for his message at all costs. The resurrection meant that God Almighty also stood for it. In other words, it meant that the universe was back of Christ, and that the Sermon on the Mount, instead of being merely the enthusiastic ideal of a young prophet, was like gravitation, a part of natural law.

THE CROSS CONDEMNS CONVENTIONAL CHRISTIANITY

This glorification of the Man whom respectable religionists abhorred has many practical consequences. If the crucified Jesus is the ideal man, then a great deal that poses to-day as good religion is little short of mockery. Can any one indeed take a long look at Jesus on the cross, and remain complacent? Pious performances, charities which cost so little sacrifice, kind deeds which mean such slight inconvenience, all shrivel up when we behold the Nazarene with his crown of thorns.

But not only are we put to shame by Christ's self-sacrifice; we are to be judged by it. The resurrection meant the vindication of the claim of Jesus to be the final judge of the world. Hence his love to the uttermost is to be the standard by which we go up or down. The old theology preached that it was a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God; the new theology preaches that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the merciful Christ. To be weighed in the balances with the love of the Galilean is a terrible test. The most awful words in Scripture are those which speak of "the wrath of the Lamb."

THE CROSS ENCOURAGES THE REPENTANT

Strangely enough, this death and resurrection of Jesus which fill every man but the Pharisee and the fool with great misgiving, bring at the same time a message of hope and salvation. For while we well need fear to have our treatment of our fellow men judged by One who loved them with such measureless passion, we need have no fear of our reception if we go to Him with sincere repentance. For the same Christ whose javelins pierced the complacency of the Pharisees, lifted up his hand with blessing over penitent publicans and harlots. The cross of Christ bids men not only to tremble, but also to rejoice.

All who desire to forsake their sins can hear the same words that thrilled the soul of blind Bartimæus, "Be of good cheer, rise, he calleth thee."

The same sacrificial love that condemns our religious performances as utterly futile, assures us that we need no rites or ceremonies to open the way to God, but can come and simply cast ourselves upon his fathomless mercy. Moreover, God's love is so great that he cannot wait until we perform our little ceremony and do our penance before he blesses us. Like the father in the parable he sees us a great way off, and runs to welcome us, and breaks into our prayer with the command, Bring hither the best robe and put it on him.

Indeed the one problem before men who are sick of their sins is the problem of believing that through Christ who died and rose again they may be at once restored to right relations to God. Now this believing which is required of the sinner is not believing in any religious proposition or in any creed. It is not even believing in the Bible as a book. As Karl Barth and his followers so constantly emphasize, it is believing in the living God himself. It is the soul's response to God's direct call. It is saying, Yes, to the Saviour who comes personally and says, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

The wonder of the cross is this, that when we look at it everything sinks into insignificance save God's infinite love, and our great need of him. The cross makes the transaction between God and man supremely intense, direct and simple.

THE CROSS MAKES DUTY SIMPLE

And now what do the sufferings of Christ mean to us? What practical response do they demand in our lives?

Fortunately the answer here also is very simple. "This is my commandment," says Jesus, "that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." (John 15. 12.) St. Augustine caught the evangelical note when he said, "Love and do as you please." But of course love must be very real and chemically pure from sentimentality. Love implies the crucifixion of the flesh. This does not mean that the Christian should look about for a hard thing to do. It means that he should simply love to the limit. That will bring him all the hardship that he can endure. But fortunately also it will bring him great joy, and this joy will be so prominent in his life that men will not notice the suffering, and sometimes he will hardly notice it himself. For it is the miracle of Christianity that we can rejoice and suffer at the same time, just as God does.

Now if our one duty is to love, we are released from the straitjacket of a thousand conventional rules. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Love is so vital that it overflows conventions, and breaks prison bars and consigns all handcuffs to the scrap heap. This unconventionality will shock some people, as Jesus continually shocked the Pharisees, but it will mean power and life. The Christian, like St. Francis of Assisi, will for ever be doing things which are not on the program, and which are not prescribed by the set rules of etiquette. There will be about him a continual and delightful surprise, as there is about the capers and frolics of a happy child.

THE CROSS A NEW REVELATION OF GOD AND OF DUTY

When Jesus gave the disciples the cup at the Last Supper he said, "This cup is the New Covenant in my blood." A new covenant between God and man is an arrangement by which God reveals to men that he can be counted on to do certain things that they had not previously known about, and that he also expects men in their turn to do certain new things. To-day we describe a new covenant between God and man as a discovery of some new law according to which God works. The old Hebrew would say that the radio was a new covenant by which God revealed to man that he would carry his voice through mountain chains, and over continents, if man would meet certain conditions.

When Jesus died for the world, he made a new revelation of the infinite love of God. This revelation made all the old machinery of animal sacrifice and legal observance unnecessary. It said, The love of God is so great that all you need to do is to believe, and you are saved.

But, of course, as we have said, it was a new covenant in another sense. The death of Christ for sinners revealed new things that God expected us to do. He expected man to love him in spirit and in truth. And the New Testament with its astonishing fervor and joy testifies that men did respond in a way never known before in the history of the world. But we have not yet begun to realize what an altogether new thing the covenant in Christ's blood is. And certainly we have not begun to realize the changes that ought to be made in our industrial, commercial and political life, as a result of this amazing revelation of God's love. To discover the practical implications of the new covenant in Christ's blood is the glorious task of the future.

THE DANGER OF DESPISING THE CROSS

It is a very dangerous thing to presume upon the free grace of God as proclaimed through the death of Christ without the purification of our lives and an answering sacrifice of grateful obedience.

In the parable of the wedding garment (Matthew 22. 1-14) the king comes in and finds a man who, because the invitation to the feast had been free for all, had concluded that it was not necessary to show ordinary respect for it. "Friend," says the king, "how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment?" The man was speechless; he had no excuse. He had simply despised the king's feast. And so the king commanded him to be bound hand and foot and to be cast into the outer darkness.

This parable is at the present time a special message from God. Men accept the free grace offered through the cross, and wax sentimental over the love of God, but do not seem to appreciate that this grace implies on their part something more than the conventional type of pleasure-seeking Christianity.

The story is a symbol of that which inevitably happens to the man who counts the death of Christ for sinners as a cheap thing. Moral paralysis binds him hand and foot, and darkness settles down upon his soul.

SUFFERING MAN CRIES OUT FOR A SUFFERING GOD

It is hard to believe that God loves as Jesus did. But on the other hand if God does not love sinners with the intensity of Christ, and does not suffer with them, then he is not as worthy of respect as many a good man who bears on his back the woes of his fellow sufferers. A God who is engaged in some kind of cosmic golf game while his creatures groan and die, what kind of a God is he? The more our widening knowledge reveals to us the suffering of the world the more it becomes evident that there can be no God whom in our hearts we could hail as Master, save the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was the world's great burdenbearer. Of a God who suffers with his children, and of him alone, can we say,

> Bless the Lord, O my soul;
> And all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Merciful God, give us a vision of the cross. We are so blinded by worldliness and luxury that it has grown dim before our eyes. We would see Jesus. We would see him as crucified for us. We would see him as crucified for our brothers. Melt our hearts with the thought of his tender love, and grant us grace to forsake all our sins. If we are held back by fear and a sense of unworthiness, *help us to see that Christ himself will be our righteousness. In his power may our lives henceforth overflow with gratitude. May we be merciful to all men, even as God is merciful to us. Knit us together in such charity and long-suffering that all men may know that we are thy disciples because we have love one to another. And this we ask for Jesus' sake, Amen.*

And it shall be in the last days, saith God,
I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh:
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams.

—*Joel.*

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.—*Isaiah 30. 21.*

JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus Assumed the Coming of the Spirit

By the Task He Assigned

Jesus assumed that his followers would have the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He assumed it by the size of the task that he laid upon them. They were to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. How could Galilæan fishermen face the Roman empire and the savage tribes beyond, without supernatural reenforcement?

By his Silences

Jesus also assumed that the disciples would have the Holy Spirit by what he left unsaid. He left no form of organization for his church, assuming that the Spirit would guide his followers to adapt themselves to changing circumstances. He doubtless knew that perplexing problems would fairly swarm upon the church the moment it crossed the borders of Palestine, but he wrote no book of rules to guide it in such matters.

Then, too, how little Jesus says about a man's daily program of devotion! Mohammed prescribed prayer five times a day. Jesus did not even prescribe it once a day. He left this also to the guidance of the Spirit.

By the Manner of His Teaching

But Jesus assumed the coming of the Spirit not only by his silences, but by the manner of his teaching. His words simply cannot be taken literally and reduced to rules. What will a mere literalist make out of the command, "Salute no man on the way," or, "If thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee," or, "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, . . . he cannot be my disciple?" The whole form of the teaching of Jesus makes one think of an eagle with a nest high up on a precipice pulling the eaglets out from the nest and dropping them into the air so that they must use their wings or fall.

JESUS PROMISED THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT

But Jesus not only assumed that men would have the illumination of the Spirit, He definitely promised it. "He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. . . . Ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1. 4, 5.) "When they deliver you up," said he, "be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matthew 10. 19, 20.) His words to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;" (Matthew 16. 19) are a vivid and picturesque promise of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The baptismal formula preserved to us by Matthew, whether it came to the disciples as an articulate word of Jesus or not, is certainly in harmony with the whole tenor of his teaching. It commands the apostles to baptize men "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." That is to say, They were to initiate men not only into faith in the fatherhood of God and the lordship of Jesus, but also into the experience of the living leadership of the Holy Spirit. They were to be baptized into what they knew, and into what they were going to know. We have the same thought in Paul's account of his conversion where the voice says to him, "To this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee." (Acts 26. 16.)

To this agree the words of the Fourth Gospel where Jesus says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth." (John 16. 12, 13.) There are people who object to the Upper Room Discourses as evidence of the actual words of Jesus. But whether or not they are his words, they are certainly the plain and restrained account of what the writer and his circle were experiencing as they trusted in Christ. And what happens to a man when he trusts in Christ is a word of Christ.

THE LIVING CHRIST AND THE SPIRIT

Scriptural Language Apparently Inconsistent

The New Testament makes no effort to be formally consistent when it speaks of the future presence of Christ with his disciples and the coming of the Holy Spirit. In Acts (16. 6, 7) we read, "And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not." In the fourth Gospel Jesus says, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter." But immediately afterward he adds, "I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you." (John 14. 16, 18.)

It is hard to reconcile this language. The Spirit is another Comforter in place of Jesus, and yet Jesus himself is to be in the heart of the disciples. It is easy enough to say that these are simply different ways of saying precisely the same thing. But this does violence to the language. Why should Jesus speak of sending another Comforter? And yet, on the other hand, to talk as though we had three Gods is violently unscriptural, and also nauseatingly repugnant to the mind.

An Explanation That Is Too Simple

The fashionable modern method of handling the difficulty is to say that there is one God, the Father, that Jesus was simply the best man that ever lived, in whom God most perfectly revealed himself, and that the Holy Spirit is merely a name for God as he reveals himself in the human heart. This simplifies the matter, and seems quite reasonable, but the simplification is obtained by discarding a large part of the New Testament which consistently ascribes divinity to Christ. Furthermore, the type of Christianity which makes Jesus simply the supreme saint always becomes like a river that loses itself in the dry sands.

There is such a thing as being too simple in religion. In the natural world as we ascend in the scale of being life becomes more complex. A mammal is vastly more complex than an amœba, and man is immeasurably more complex than the other mammals. Imagine an orang-outang trying to visualize the processes of Shakespeare's mind! Now if life becomes more complex as we ascend, it seems reasonable to suppose that God who is infinitely above us should have a nature infinitely richer and more complex.

Doctrine of Trinity a Reflection of Christian Experience

Another thing that we must stress is that the New Testament's way of speaking of God, now as the Father, now as the Son, and now as the Holy Spirit, springs not out of the theologian's study, but out of human experience. Men look up at the starlit heavens, and out at the wonders of nature, and are awed; and they exclaim, God, the Creator of all things! This is an experience.

They read the Gospels and as they look to the Christ portrayed there, and try to obey his commands, they are hushed into reverence, and they find themselves praying, O Christ, help me to walk in thy commandments. And strangely enough they are helped. It is as though God were around somewhere. The Most High does not seem to be offended at being called Christ, for he answers their call. This is not a theory of the divinity of Christ; this is a fact.

But Jesus told his disciples that if they kept his commandments and witnessed for him before the world, they would be reenforced by the Holy Spirit. And when men obey him and have the nerve to stand for him before the world, they feel themselves mysteriously strengthened and inspired. A voice within becomes their constant monitor. Whenever they do wrong the lights seem to go out. Whenever they perform an unselfish act, additional burners seem to be turned on. When the ways part and they do not know which path to take, an inner impulse guides them aright. This voice of God in the soul is not a theory, it is a fact. Jesus is not there in the flesh, but God is guiding them in the ways of Jesus, and so they are moved to express this reality of experience by saying that they are guided by the Holy Spirit.

Our problem, then, is not how to juggle with some theological speculations, but how to be honest and reverent toward some of the deepest experiences of the soul. The man who rides roughshod over the New Testament's varied ways of speaking about God is not riding over some professor's dogma, but over the witness of the human heart in its highest moods.

There are times of extreme stress when nothing is quite sufficient save the thought of the presence of the Crucified and Risen Christ. A brilliant young theologian who disapproves of prayer to Christ, confessed to the writer that once when he bent over the bed of a dying girl he simply had to say to her, "Now just trust in Jesus, he will see you through." "And," said he, "my words manifestly brought comfort and help." The lifelong and age-long sustaining power of this faith that he who wore a crown of thorns is present with us in our troubles, is God's stamp of approval upon it. Derricks which are anchored on thin air do not lift such mighty loads.

On the other hand, when God reveals himself as the divine voice within us, it is more natural to speak of him as the Holy Spirit. And there are still other moods when we are moved to fall upon our faces and worship the Creator and Father of men. Thus does our Christian faith supply completely the varying necessities of the human heart.

We do not pretend to have made the matter clear. We have simply attempted to put into other language a little of the thought of the New Testament. Back in the divine personality there are relationships which we are not able to express. If God were not beyond our powers of analysis he would not be God. The New Testament does not make a vain attempt to explain these deep mysteries. It is concerned in helping us joyously to seize all the varied opportunities that are presented to us for coming in touch with the Divine.

The important question is not, Have we reached a satisfactory solution of the doctrine of the trinity?

but, Do we have a vivid sense of the presence of God in nature and in human life? Does Christ glow before us as a living reality, and as we follow him do we experience a wonderful reenforcement that enables us to attempt and accomplish tasks quite beyond our natural power? Or, in other words, have we what our fathers called the witness of the Spirit, that inner evidence that we are vitally in connection with those glowing divine realities which thrill through the pages of the New Testament?

In recent years it has been out of fashion to talk about the witness of the Spirit. Our fathers tended to make it a matter of emotional thrill, and out of disgust with this fanaticism we have tended to ignore it, or psycho-analyze it into a mere excitation of the nerves. But spiritual realities can never be disposed of in that way. And now everywhere in the flood of books on mysticism men are eagerly discussing the inner evidences of the Spirit's presence.

Live by Faith Alone But Expect the Witness of the Spirit

As we approach this subject we are faced with a certain superficial contradiction in the teaching of the Scripture. The Bible teaches that the Christian should set his face like flint to believe in the love of God, no matter how dark it is within or without. And instead of complaining of the lack of an inner witness he is to give thanks for the privilege of claiming by naked faith the promises that the Bible broadcasts to all sinners.

To insist that we must have some inner sign before we believe is presumption. To seek to superinduce that inner sign by a series of psychological setting-up exercises, is essentially pagan. It implies that a man can work himself up into a state of blessedness. The great saints never cultivated ecstasies, never performed incantations for the sake of superinducing desired moods. They loved God, and in that love they forgot themselves.

On the other hand, the new movement in Germany, which discounts all mysticism, is equally unscriptural, for it practically says that the Christian is to keep on believing that he has the Spirit without having in his life the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul said to the Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3. 2.) He here implies that the coming of the Spirit into their lives was something of which they were distinctly aware at the time. In the Fourth Gospel we read, "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John 14. 20.) These citations could be multiplied indefinitely.

Thus we have a paradox. We do not dare doubt God when it grows dark, and yet we have a right to expect the light that surprises the Christian on his way. Paul beautifully puts these two opposites together in the fifth of Romans where he says, "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh stedfastness; and stedfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope; and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us."

Here Paul puts the stress on living heroically by naked faith in the infinite mercy of Christ. But he also shows that God does not allow faith to be naked very long in this cold world, but he clothes it with the garment of salvation. He first gives a man a consciousness of increasing strength of character, and finally pours out upon his heart through the Holy Spirit the abundant evidence of his love.

The signs of the Spirit's presence always come to men after they have been humbly keeping the commandments of God, and doing his work in a time of great darkness. As men love and serve and dare when the fogs hang low and there is no outward sign of the presence of God, suddenly they see a great light and they have an unforgettable manifestation of the Spirit's power. The emotion may fade, but the memory of it remains a lighthouse amid the darkness of this world's experiences. Finally men become so sure that God is with them in the darkness that even the darkness seems no longer dark. Then they are blessed indeed.

THE TESTS OF THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE

A distinction ought to be made between those experiences of the Spirit's enduement which are promised to all, and which all must enjoy if they call themselves Christians at all, and those other experiences which are given from time to time for the special encouragement of men who are faced with unusual difficulties, or charged with unusual responsibilities. Not all men have the gift of tongues, not all can prophesy or work miracles.

But all men should have in their hearts the witness of the Holy Spirit which is found in the fact that in all their thinking about God and in all their attitude toward him, they now cry, Abba, Father. Just as we test a pair of spectacles not by how they look, but by how they make other things look, so we test ourselves not by how we feel, but by how God looks to us. If he seems like a Father, then we have the spirit of sonship.

And as for the tests of the Spirit's presence in our attitude toward men, they are beautifully and simply put by Paul: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." (Galatians 5. 22.)

The first question a man should ask is, Do I love folks? "Hereby know we that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." And by love is meant something far more than a sentimental feeling. It means invincible good will. Do people seem interesting to me? Is there a romantic glamour about common folks? Do they seem enormously worth while?

And if a man loves he will have great joy and peace. But, says some one, I try to serve God, but

I do not always have joy and peace. My mind is often disturbed by emotional storms which are beyond my control. The answer to this perplexity is another question: When you do not have joy, do you rejoice? The joy of which Paul speak is no mere emotion. It is an ethical attitude toward life. All wholehearted Christians have an inner gladnesss, but the root of the matter is the attitude of the will. The real question is not, Do they feel good? but, Are they cheerful? Are they like Paul and Silas in prison who prayed and sang praises at midnight?

And a similar question can be asked about peace. When an emotional storm comes down upon you and tosses you about, is your faith invincibly fixed upon Christ so that the storm soon ceases and the waves become quiet? If so, the fact that you have psychical storms need not disturb you. Your power to be brave in the midst of them ought rather to be an encouragement. There is a world-wide distinction between Christian peace and the serenity that comes from a pipe or a drug. The peace of Christ is not dependent on circumstances. Jesus was at peace in the midst of the storm; and it was on the night before his crucifixion that he could say to his disciples, "My peace I give unto you."

Then in order to claim the presence of the Spirit a man must have longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness. Or, in other words, he must have grace to be very tender, compassionate and kindly to his erring and unreasonable fellow men. He must have the might of meekness. And as a result of the fact that he is busy manifesting the love of God to his fellow men, and has the joy and peace that always come to the true lover of humanity, there comes to him unusual power of self-control. He is the master of his passions, he has power to crucify the flesh.

Men who have these qualities can rejoice greatly, for God is with them. Even onlookers can detect the power of Christ in their lives. They have the witness of the Spirit in its most unmistakable form.

These experiences are to be perennial. Other times of high exaltation, like the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain, from the nature of the case are only temporary, and their sudden departure should not disturb the disciple. The vanishing of the vision is God's command to go down into the valley and carry it out in deeds of service and suffering.

CONDITIONS FOR RECEIVING THE SPIRIT

If a man would receive the Holy Spirit he must listen to Christ as he speaks through the Gospels and through his messengers. Listening to Christ inspires us with a desire for the Holy Spirit. Most men do not deeply and profoundly hunger and thirst after God. They do not have the Spirit because they do not earnestly desire his presence.

But when a man studies about Christ and listens to him, and constantly hears his messengers, there is begotten within him a great hunger and thirst after righteousness. And Jesus says, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

And more than that, the study of the words of Jesus shows us what we ought to mean when we say, O God, give me thy spirit. An appalling amount of prayer for the Holy Spirit is a prayer for some kind of pleasing thrill or ecstacy. The coming of the Holy Spirit is often accompanied by exalted ecstasy, but the Holy Spirit is not an ecstasy or a thrill.

Sometimes men pray for the Holy Spirit very earnestly and all the answer they seem to get is a sense of utter emptiness. Did they but know it, the coming of a sense of helplessness to a proud, self-sufficient man, is a coming of the Holy Spirit. To those of us who look on it would seem like a great miracle for some people to be disturbed from their self-sufficient complacency. It would be the beginning of great things for them.

Another important condition for receiving the Holy Spirit is unity with one's fellow Christians. We are told that before Pentecost they were "all with one accord" in one place. They certainly must have been men and women of different tastes, and of perhaps violently differing opinions, and certainly people of different social rank. But they were all united in a great hope that Christ was going to do something extraordinary to give them power to spread his gospel. And their hope was fulfilled. Whenever, as one has said, a group of men are perfectly united in prayer for power to perform some great task which God has laid upon them, something always happens supernatural, extraordinary and unpredictable.

Now this spirit of unity which is such an important condition for receiving the grace of God, means not merely a unity in some prayer meeting, but a perpetual habit of eager listening to all kinds of people of all races and colors who might conceivably have for us any message from the Spirit of God. When we are seeking God we ought not to be confined merely to teachers of religion. He communicates himself to us in many forms of literature. He comes to us through science and through nature. Sunsets and sunrises become sacraments of God.

And then finally if a man would have the Holy Spirit he must make a habit of attempting whatever service Providence plainly demands of him. Jesus said to the man with a withered hand, "Stretch forth thy hand." And in attempting to do so his hand was restored. This is a parable of the way in which men receive the strength of God. Let a man be sure that the task which is presented to him is a normal and sensible thing to do, let him be sure that it is his task, and not another's, and then with prayers, in spite of his weakness, let him undertake it. And in the attempt he will become conscious of a power not his own working through him. If a man's life is a continual series of adventures that count upon the divine reenforcement, he will know of a truth what Jesus meant when he said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

EXPERIENCES THAT BELIE THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE

It is not easy always to believe that the Holy Spirit guides those who seek his direction. One of the reasons for this is that we are apt to assume that if God is really guiding us we shall be led at once to decisions that are infallible. A young city missionary who prays much for the divine guidance has it borne in on him that he must visit a certain family in the slums. It is the leading of God! He obeys forthwith the divine summons, and climbs the stairs of the tenement house, and knocks. No one answers. Finally a head is stuck out of the door down the hallway.

> "Vat youse vant, Mister?"
> "I want to see Mr. Finkelstein."
> "O dot man, he moved to New York dree veeks ago!"

What becomes of divine leading under such circumstances?

On the other hand, so sane a man as Ian Maclaren tells us that the minister as he studies will often have a strong impression that he ought to go to a certain house. If he is wise, he will obey it at once. When he knocks at the door he will be embarrassed at the thought that he has no errand to explain his coming; but he needs none, for in nine cases out of ten his visit will be regarded as a providence. Thus our experiences are contradictory.

If we forswear reliance on impressions, and say that the Spirit of God guides us only through the reason, the outcome of our reasoned courses is quite as contradictory. Into what tragic mistakes have men been led by the conscientious following out of the logic of their beliefs. The man who demands a logical reason for everything will soon be labeled as lacking in common sense, for common sense is largely a matter of following healthy impulses.

The fact is, man is like a triple-screw steamer. He gets into port by the combined action of Scripture, reason and inner impressions. And even if his decisions are checked up by these three sources of guidance, the results will sometimes be disconcerting.

It is plainly not in the plan of God to guide his children infallibly to their goal without a series of experiments. All nature is organized by the Creator on the principle that in order to obtain results there must be a prodigal amount of experimentation. Every tree sends forth every year myriads of seeds. Perhaps one seed in twenty years develops into another tree. The sower went forth to sow; says Jesus. Some seeds fell by the wayside, some on the stony ground, some among thorns; only a part of the seeds brought forth fruit. Christ himself was compelled to experiment. One of his experiments in choosing his staff had a terrible negative result.

The failure of one experiment, however, does not disprove the reality of the divine leading. Will any one say that the search of the physicians for the cause of yellow fever was not led of God because the preliminary experiments were unsuccessful? A part of the divine reenforcement is God's gift of persistence to keep on searching until we find the right path.

Another part, of course, is the instinct which enables us to know when we have found it.

The biblical writers were profoundly impressed when the Scripture and the inner impression and the outward providence converged. Peter's vision on the housetop and the vision of Cornelius telling him to send for Peter, and the fact that God so marvelously poured out his Spirit upon Cornelius and his house—these three facts convinced the early church that the Spirit was guiding them to make the radical departure of receiving non-Jews into the church without circumcision. (Acts 10.) The inner impression and providence dovetailed in this case. And so they constantly do when God is leading his children into some new adventure.

The man who profoundly trusts in the leading of the Spirit will have much to try his faith by the way, but in the long retrospect he will have an overwhelming sense of the guiding hand of God in his life.

Our heavenly Father, we beseech thee to grant us the gift of thy Holy Spirit. May he make Christ for ever real to us, and cause his Word to shine before us like a lamp upon our pathway. Through the might of thy Spirit may we have strength of body, mind and soul, for all our tasks. And may love, joy and peace, the fruit of the Spirit, abound in our lives. Especially give us that unity of mind and heart with all our fellow disciples which will lead to a new Pentecost in the church of God. And this we ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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